

DECLARE VICTORY AND STAY? ■ DERSHOWITZ v. DESCH

JANUARY 16, 2006

# The American Conservative

# The Next Iraq?



**SYRIA**

# ***AMERICA IS NOW EXTREMELY VULNERABLE***

We are facing changing conditions and threats while spreading ourselves dangerously thin. We are trying to manage problems that we may not be able to properly handle as we dismantle our industrial infrastructure, outsource our manufacturing, and try to fight three wars. How can we cope with these threats and uncertainties while becoming very dependent on foreign loans (Japan \$700 Billion - China \$200 Billion - and Billions more from other nations) to fund our military and imports to support our lifestyle.

- **Fighting global wars with a military stretched to the breaking point**
- **Importing over \$1.25 million more per minute than we export creating a lean on our assets allowing foreign companies to buy and control our major industries (e.g. movies - 69%; cement - 81%; TV manufacturing - 100% foreign owned)**
- **Cutting taxes while at the same time under-funding our military**
- **The constant uncertainty of a terrorist attack on US soil and the economic impact it would have**
- **Bankrupting major companies that can't compete or selling them to pay for our lifestyle of imports**
- **In the last 10 years we have sold 8,600 of our best companies to foreign ownership (e.g. Chrysler, Amoco, Arco Oil)**
- **Dismantling our industrial base and relying on foreign manufacturing for imports and jobs**
- **Losing record amounts in internal (budget - \$413 Billion) and external (trade - \$617 Billion) deficits**
- **Looming rising interest rates and the subsequent ripple impact throughout the economy**

All the while our government repeatedly tell us that as our GDP continues to grow at a healthy pace, that jobs are being created, that unemployment is low, and that we are winning the war on terror. They are also telling us that we should continue to borrow and spend, and not be concerned with the economy, which we are told is excellent and growing.

## **How can we reconcile these two opposing differences?**

We can't of course. GDP is no longer an accurate measure of our sustainable national economic health because it is now driven primarily by debt - personal, government, and trade, and by services rather than production. Foreign ownership and control of our key industries is also distorting the reality of who is benefiting from so-called economic growth. As further evidence of this, jobs are being lost in manufacturing and replaced in service-oriented sectors like retail, healthcare, and government - sectors that don't create value, but merely exchange wealth, which is at the same time being siphoned out of our economy by massive import imbalances with foreign countries.

## **If our leaders do not recognize reality, how can we hope to plan for the future?**

If America is to continue to be the land of opportunity, what must we do to insure our position in this changing world? The first step is to understand the true condition of our country, which is inexorably heading towards uncontrollable problems and uncertainties that are now making us extremely vulnerable.

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# Contents

January 16, 2006 / Vol. 5, No. 1



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[ STRATEGY ]

## Syria In Their Sights

BY ROBERT DREYFUSS For the neoconservatives, one Middle Eastern war at a time may not be enough. **Page 10**

[ PRESIDENCY ]

## Declare Victory and Stay

BY SCOTT MCCONNELL In his ongoing flight from the reality-based community, President Bush unveils yet another plan for victory in Iraq. **Page 14**

[ IDEAS ]

## Painting the White House Red

BY JOHN LAUGHLAND The torch of global revolution has passed from old-school Communists to neoconservative democracy-promoters. **Page 16**

### COLUMNS

- 9** Patrick J. Buchanan: Karen Hughes has her work cut out.  
**27** Kara Hopkins: Dressing up amnesty  
**35** Taki: Thomas Fleming fights for the West.

### NEWS & VIEWS

- 4** *Fourteen Days*: The Business of War; The Christians Made Me Do It; Rumsfeld Minds His Language  
**6** Forum: Dershowitz v. Desch  
**15** *Deep Background*: Torture Didn't End With Saddam; Europe's Suicide Bombers; Cheney Holds Back

### ARTICLES

- 20** Theodore Dalrymple: A British doctor who once practiced in Rhodesia diagnoses Africa's ills.  
**24** Georgie Anne Geyer: Washington has become an uncivil society.

### ARTS & LETTERS

- 28** Steve Sailer: Rob Marshall's "Memoirs of a Geisha"  
**29** Christopher Preble: *Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground* by Robert Kaplan  
**31** R.J. Stove: *Beethoven: The Universal Composer* by Edmund Morris  
**33** Ilana Mercer: *Women's Lives, Men's Laws* by Catharine A. MacKinnon

COVER MAP: KRT. COVER DESIGN: MARK GRAEF



[WAR]

## IRAQ: THE GOOD NEWS

TAC has been accused overlooking the good news in Iraq and focusing on the negative, but some benefits have definitely flowed from the invasion. Take the case of David H. Brooks, CEO of Long Island-based DHB Industries, which makes bulletproof vests for the military. His is one of the war's most glittering success stories.

In 2001, Brooks earned the nice but hardly kingly sum of \$525,000. But with the invasion of Iraq, Pentagon contracts poured in and his company thrived. The vests DHB produced were not perfect (but what is?), and 5,000 of them were recalled for failure to meet specifications. But that didn't thwart Mr. Brooks. Last year, he was able to sell company stock worth \$186 million, and has reportedly made over \$250 million since the war began.

Nor has Brooks been the sort to sit back and clip coupons; he has gone out to share the wealth. Last month Brooks gave a bat mitzvah party for his daughter Elizabeth that will surely go down in history. He brought in Tom Petty, Aerosmith, Don Henley, Stevie Nicks, and Kenny G for the parents; for the kids, rappers Ciara and 50 Cent. Brooks himself wore a black leather, metal-studded suit, then changed into a hot-pink suede version of the same outfit. The coming of age party cost an estimated \$10 million.

We hear so much bad news about Iraq, but critics have to admit that if we hadn't invaded, this party would not have been possible. For perfectly embodying the values of the Bush presidency, David H. Brooks should be in line soon for the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

[CULTURE]

## BLAME THE BIBLE BELT

James Kurth makes a novel and important point in the fledgling foreign policy journal *The American Interest*. He pre-

dicts that evangelical Christians will be allotted a disproportionate and unjust share of the blame for the train wreck that is George W. Bush's foreign policy. Kurth records that evangelicals supported the Bush democratization project "because it was a *Bush* project and they were already committed to his policy (or more accurately his rhetoric) on cultural and social issues." Previously, evangelical Protestants had not made foreign policy a priority and were indifferent to the democratization projects proposed by the Clinton administration. Evangelicals would welcome the expansion of democracy for the missionary opportunities it opens but "think such opening will come about through God's work and not through their own political actions." Evangelicals who take the Bible seriously know that Christ is the light of the world and that to see America in this light is a form of idolatry.

Evangelicals were recruited to join the Bush war coalition; they didn't apply pressure to go to war. Nonetheless, Kurth maintains, they are likely to emerge as the principal scapegoats. Liberals and secular conservatives will readily agree that evangelicals are to blame, while "the real architects of Bush foreign policy will be forgotten, if not forgiven, because they do not threaten

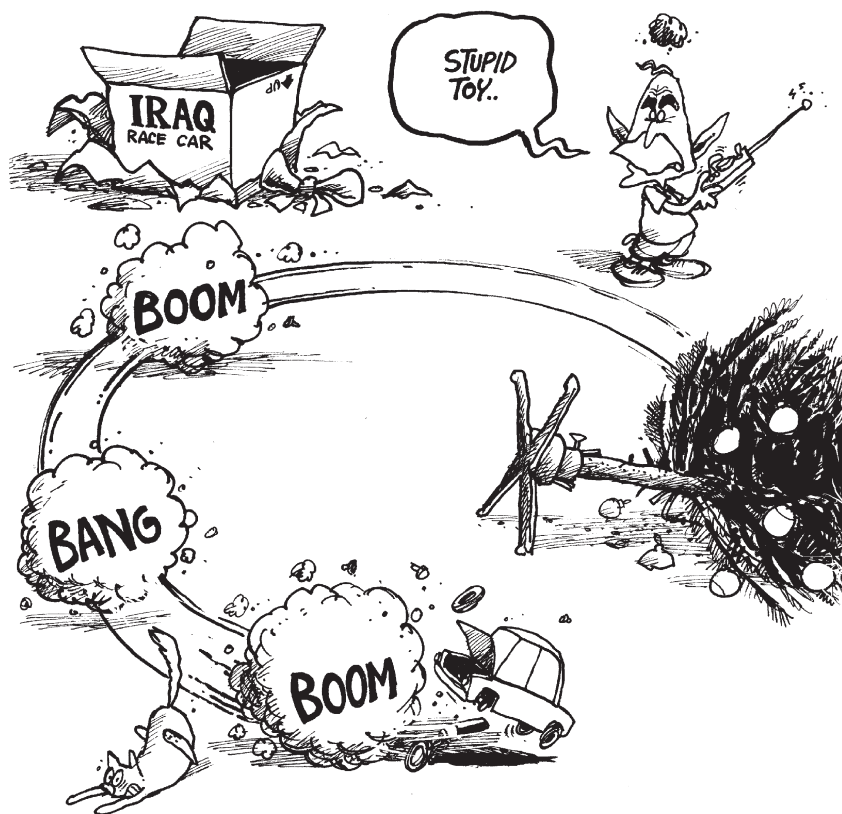
Democrats and liberals on ... cultural and social issues." Evangelicals do threaten liberal cultural hegemony, however, and "the opportunity to marginalize them by blaming them for a foreign policy debacle will be irresistible." Time will tell whether Kurth is right, but the odds, sad to say, are in his favor.

[SPIN]

## RUMMY'S THESAURUS

Over Thanksgiving, Donald Rumsfeld had—his word—an "epiphany." No, he hasn't realized that guys named Curveball make lousy informants or that "stuff happens" isn't the best way to justify an occupation gone bad. He's discovered that "This is a group of people who don't merit the word 'insurgency.'" Reason being, they "don't have a legitimate gripe." (Admitting that his distinction might be lost on standard usage, the SecDef promised to look it up. Our *Merriam-Webster* defines insurgent as "a person who rises in revolt against civil authority or an established government." No requirement that the authority consider the rebels' grievance reasonable.)

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Peter Pace, who followed Rumsfeld at the press conference, slipped up and used the "i" word twice—"I can't think of a better word right now." Rumsfeld



recommended the lyrical “enemies of the legitimate Iraqi government.” Bush waxed even more poetic, designating the opposition “rejectionists.”

But it’s not about word games. Playing with the thesaurus doesn’t lessen the zeal of the resistance, and refusing to understand the nature of their fury because we prefer a softer label will only raise the cost of our folly.

[POLITICS]

## CLOSING RANKS

When it comes to getting his way on Capitol Hill, Bush has long enjoyed a secret weapon—Democrats willing to break ranks and support him for good (tax cuts) or ill (Iraq). In the House alone, 41 Democrats represent districts Bush carried in 2004, while only 18 Republicans hail from districts won by John Kerry.

The increasing unity of the House Democrats is another sign of the president’s devalued political capital. In a recent budget vote where 11 moderate Republicans bucked their leadership, not a single Democrat defected. Democrats are slowly groping toward a consensus against the Bush foreign policy. Their leaders are telling members in swing districts to sit tight, gains are coming in 2006.

For most of Bush’s presidency, the opposition has recalled Will Rogers’s famous quip: “I’m not a member of any organized political party. I’m a Democrat.” But finally, at least as far as House Democrats are concerned, Bush is a uniter and not a divider.

[JUSTICE]

## CHIPPING AWAY?

As we go to press, the Roberts-led Supreme Court is wading into the abortion debate in *Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood*. At issue is New Hampshire’s parental-notification law, which allows pregnant teenagers to obtain abortions, if their lives are in danger, without telling mom and dad but does not con-

tain the kind of health exception that has allowed similar statutes to survive high court challenges.

It’s unclear where John Roberts wants to take the court on abortion, and the outcome of this case may signal whether he is willing to accept the *status quo*, reconsider *Roe v. Wade*, or more likely, slowly expand the perimeter of acceptable abortion restrictions. So far, Roberts has offered few clues. Some legal analysts have speculated the court might read a health exception into the law; others have suggested it might end or curtail Sandra Day O’Connor’s “undue burden” test, which has overturned many a state abortion regulation.

Samuel Alito is waiting in the wings. Democratic senators have pilloried him for a 1985 memo in which he endorsed slowly chipping away at *Roe* as opposed to a full frontal assault. During the confirmation hearings, they will try to determine whether this remains Alito’s strategy. *Ayotte* may reveal whether it is the Roberts Court’s—or if conservatives have been fooled again.

[MEDIA]

## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

Despite what rejectionists say here at home, brave Iraqis are making progress fighting terrorists and building democratic institutions. Terrorism is unknown in 17 of the country’s 18 provinces. Chapters of the Iraqi-Israeli Friendship Society have blossomed from Baghdad to Basra. Women are free to pursue any career and dress any way they please. Never has a country been more unified. That’s why we call it “Iraq the model.”

Well, don’t blame us for trying. We read the *Los Angeles Times* headline “U.S. Military Covertly Pays to Run Stories in Iraqi Press” and thought we could use a few dinars ourselves. We eagerly await our Christmas present from the Lincoln Group, the PR firm handling the Pentagon’s account. ■

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# Dershowitz v. Desch

*In our Dec. 5 issue, The American Conservative published a review of Norman Finkelstein's Beyond Chutzpah by contributing editor Michael Desch. Alan Dershowitz, whose scholarship was critiqued by Finkelstein's book, objected at length, attacking both the author and our reviewer. His complaint, along with Desch's reply, follows.*

## Dershowitz writes:

When a far right-wing magazine embraces an avowed communist, the topic under consideration must be Jews and Israel. It is not surprising, then, that *The American Conservative* has found a kindred spirit in Norman Finkelstein. Both have declared war against "American Jewish elites," and both spout wild conspiracy theories about Jewish influence on America's media, culture, government, and economy.

I am referring to Michael Desch's purported review of Finkelstein's book, *Beyond Chutzpah*. It is only a "purported" review because as the headline suggests ("The Chutzpah of Alan Dershowitz") the majority of the article is devoted to attacking me. Desch makes four accusations against me, all of which are not only false, but so sloppy and implausible that it would have taken only a few minutes of fact-checking to refute them.

(1) Desch parrots Finkelstein's claim that I have turned my back on a career as a civil libertarian by "present[ing] a brief for torture." Had he read my book, *Why Terrorism Works*, instead of relying on Finkelstein's mischaracterization of my position, Desch would know that I am a stalwart opponent of torture, that I have fought hard against torture in both America and Israel, and that my proposals are designed to minimize and hopefully prevent torture.

As I have written: "I am against tor-

ture as a normative matter, and I would like to see its use minimized. I believe that at least moderate forms of non-lethal torture are in fact being used by the United States and some of its allies today. I think that if we ever confronted an actual case of imminent mass terrorism that could be prevented by the infliction of torture, we would use torture (even lethal torture) and the public would favor its use..."

"I pose the issue as follows. If torture is, in fact, being used and/or would, in fact, be used in an actual ticking bomb terrorist case, would it be normatively better or worse to have such torture regulated by some kind of warrant, with accountability, recordkeeping, standards and limitations? This is an important debate, and a different one from the old, abstract Benthamite debate over whether torture can ever be justified. It is not so much about the substantive issue of torture as it is about accountability, visibility, and candor in a democracy that is confronting a choice of evils."

(2) Desch accuses me of a "partial reading or misreading" of Benny Morris, whom I cite several times in *The Case for Israel*. Desch concludes that "Finkelstein documents these charges in exhaustive detail in Appendix II of his book and the preponderance of evidence he provides is conclusive."

Finkelstein's "evidence" consists of empty conclusory statements. Finkelstein writes that I "significantly [misrepresent] what Morris writes in *Righteous Victims*." These are easily falsifiable charges. All one has to do is to ask Morris himself what he thinks of my characterization of his scholarship and findings. Martin Solomon, a professor at Florida Atlantic University, wrote to Morris, asking him what are "his feelings concerning the manner in which Alan Dershowitz uses citations from 'Right-

eous Victims' in his 'The Case for Israel'" and whether Morris "still hold[s] the views that Dershowitz attributes to [him]...." Morris replied that Dershowitz was "right about [his] views," even adding that one could "read [Morris's books] and arrive at the same conclusions, bypassing Dershowitz."

(3) Desch writes that Finkelstein proves that I violated "the spirit, if not the exact letter" of Harvard's plagiarism prohibition. Finkelstein first claimed that I did not write *The Case for Israel*. As he had with other Jewish writers, Finkelstein suggested that the Mossad or AIPAC had written my book for me. When I revealed the handwritten manuscript—I do not type or use a computer—Finkelstein changed his story to plagiarism. Finkelstein's accusation boils down to a claim that I "lifted" quotations from Joan Peters. Yet I cite Peters eight times, as anyone perusing my book can easily see. I even stated that "I do not in any way rely on her demographic conclusions or demographic data."

I immediately asked Harvard to investigate Finkelstein's phony charge, and Harvard conducted an independent investigation by former president Derek Bok. Finkelstein acknowledges that "former Harvard president Derek Bok, 'a scholar of unquestioned integrity,' had looked into the charges against Dershowitz and 'found that no plagiarism had occurred.' The matter was 'closed.'" In addition to being fully exonerated by Harvard University, I have been cleared by James Freedman, former president of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the *New York Times*, and numerous professors and librarians.

Desch relies on Finkelstein's accusation that I "direct [my] research assistant to go to certain pages and notes in Peters's book and place them in [my] footnotes directly." As Finkelstein

wrote, “[I]n the [galley] proofs [of *The Case for Israel*], it ... says: Copy from Joan Peters. It does. ... There was no question about it.” He thus alleges that I instructed a research assistant to “copy” from another author without citations. But he simply makes up the word “copy.” The note says precisely the opposite: “cite sources on pp. 160, 485, 486, footnotes 141–145.” The instruction is to be certain that the material is properly cited, as it was to the original source. This is not proof of plagiarism; it is proof of scholarship.

Yet Finkelstein persists in making this charge since it is part of his long pattern of leveling personal attacks against those who support Israel or justice for Holocaust survivors, rather than engaging them on the merits of their views. I fully document this pattern in Chapter 16 of my book, *The Case for Peace*. Desch

that all of my books are written for me by the Israeli Mossad: “[I]t’s sort of like a Hallmark line for Nazis....[T]hey churn them out so fast that he has now reached a point where he doesn’t even read them.”

Finkelstein has attempted to frame *Beyond Chutzpah*’s publication as a triumph for academic freedom. This dispute, though, has never been about academic freedom. Nobody ever tried to prevent Finkelstein from publishing his bigoted falsehoods. The dispute has always been about academic standards. In order to deflect attention away from their lack of academic standards and hard-left anti-Israel bias, Finkelstein and his publisher have lied about the issue of academic freedom.

Nobody has ever tried to censor Finkelstein’s drivel. He can always publish it with presses that acknowledge

The sentence construction is typical of both extremist left-wing (Finkelstein) and right-wing (*The American Conservative*) anti-Israel hatemongers. Even if the facts aren’t true, Desch believes, naked animus toward Israel is sufficient to sustain his arguments. His bigotry is showing.

—Alan Dershowitz

## Desch replies:

Alan Dershowitz calls Norman Finkelstein’s new book *Beyond Chutzpah* “drivel.” But that is hardly a fair assessment. The book was published by the University of California Press—one of the nation’s leading academic publishers—after an exceedingly thorough and scrupulous review process. The manuscript was sent to six external reviewers (most academic presses solicit advice from just one or two), vetted by lawyers in both the United States and Britain (highly unusual for a scholarly book), and then subjected to rigorous fact-checking during the production phase (also atypical). The reason Dershowitz is so hostile is that *Beyond Chutzpah* argues that in *The Case for Israel* he misappropriated and misconstrued other scholars’ work.

On the former charge, Finkelstein identifies at least 20 instances of nearly identical quotes and citations in Dershowitz’s *The Case for Israel* and Joan Peters’s widely discredited *From Time Immemorial* that were not properly attributed (e.g., he directly cited Mark Twain when he should have indicated that he was using Twain as quoted in Peters). In essence, Finkelstein deals Dershowitz a double blow: for inappropriately using another scholar’s work and for doing so from this debunked source.

Dershowitz’s response is first to build a straw man, claiming that Finkelstein contends that he did not write the book. This charge is not made in *Beyond Chutzpah*, but tellingly, Dershowitz nonetheless devotes much effort to

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“In order to deflect attention away from their lack of academic standards and hard-left anti-Israel bias, Finkelstein and his publisher have lied about the issue of academic freedom.”

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goes even further, suggesting a Jewish conspiracy involving Harvard’s president Lawrence Summers, the *New York Times*, and other pro-Israel advocates.

(4) Finally, Desch says that I “launched an extraordinary campaign to prevent [Finkelstein’s] book’s publication.” But as I wrote to the University of California Press:

“I have no interest in censoring any publication. But I do insist that a book, ‘a large part of which is devoted to Alan Dershowitz’ has been checked for accuracy and that all appropriate measures have been taken to assure that its biased and defamatory author does not include within it maliciously false information.”

Among Finkelstein’s defamations are his allegations that I “almost certainly didn’t write” *The Case for Israel*, “and perhaps [he] didn’t even read it prior to publication.” Finkelstein even suggests

their anti-Israel bias. The issue is, and has always been, one of academic standards: how could the University of California Press publish a work so lacking in standards, so filled with misquotations, falsifications, and faked data by a failed academic with a well-deserved reputation for the “pure invention” of his sources? No objective university press would have published this sequel to a book the *New York Times* called a “variation on the anti-Semitic forgery, ‘The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.’”

The most telling sentence in Desch’s article comes near the end, when he concludes: “Even if Finkelstein’s most serious charges are not true, it is nonetheless a scandal that Dershowitz’s sloppy book was widely and favorably reviewed in many prominent places, including the *New York Times*, and became a national bestseller.”



knocking the stuffing out of it. He then invokes testimonials to his scholarly integrity from his ex-boss, former Harvard president and law school dean Derek Bok, and his friend, former Dartmouth president James Freedman, when it would be more convincing if they had provided detailed responses to Finkelstein's specific charges.

Dershowitz also misconstrues the work of Israeli historian Benny Morris. It is irrelevant that the post-al Aksa Intifada Benny Morris, who has publicly broken with his former comrades in the peace camp and now endorses ethnic cleansing, has come around to agree with Dershowitz's position on the Israel-Palestine conflict. Rather, the question is

tions of Morris the "new historian" to fit Dershowitz's own political agenda of defending Israel against all critics, as Finkelstein amply documents.

Unable to win the case against Finkelstein on its intellectual merits, Dershowitz apparently tried to block publication of *Beyond Chutzpah*. Although Dershowitz denies this, he so far has not provided more than selective excerpts from his pre-publication letters to the New Press, the University of California Press, and the governor of California, and those from the New York law firm Cravath, Swaine & Moore acting on his behalf, to buttress his claims that his extensive letter-writing campaign merely sought to ensure that *Beyond Chutzpah*

strategy appears to be to twist the arguments and impugn the motives of anyone who endorses the book.

One example of such twisting is his insinuation that I have not read his book *Why Terrorism Works*. Had I done so, he claims, I would recognize that he is actually an opponent of torture. In fact, I have read it carefully but remain unconvinced that legalizing torture through judicial warrants will reduce its frequency and severity. Even with judicial sanction, any justification for torture still presents a slippery slope, as the famous "ticking bomb" rationale has proven in Israel and the United States in recent years. I also had trouble taking seriously his opposition to torture after reading of his preferred method—sterile needles under fingernails—and his cavalier conclusion that "pain is overrated."

Not satisfied simply to twist my arguments, Dershowitz then impugns my character and motives for favorably reviewing Finkelstein's book. It is absurd, on the face of it, to attribute anti-Semitism to a gentile who favors the scholarship of one Jew over that of another. But this is par for the course with Dershowitz. In *The Case for Israel*, he equates most criticisms of the Jewish state with anti-Semitism. Now he suggests that criticism of his work is tantamount to anti-Semitism. The fact that Dershowitz must fall back on name calling to defend himself suggests that he knows full well that he cannot win the debate in the scholarly marketplace of ideas.

—Michael Desch

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**"In It is absurd, on the face of it, to attribute anti-Semitism to a gentile who favors the scholarship of one Jew over that of another. But this is par for the course with Dershowitz."**

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whether Dershowitz can base his defense of Israel on Morris's earlier scholarly work.

Let me offer one telling example of the incompatibility of their overarching arguments. In *The Case for Israel*, Dershowitz argues that it is "impossible to understand the conflict in the Middle East without accepting the reality that from the very beginning the strategy of the Arab leadership has been to eliminate the existence of the Jewish state, and indeed any substantial Jewish population." In contrast, in his fine book *Righteous Victims*, Morris quotes with approval David Ben-Gurion's 1938 admission, "When we say that the Arabs are the aggressors and we defend ourselves—that is only half the truth. ... the fighting is only one aspect of the conflict, which is in its essence a political one. And politically we are the aggressors and they defend themselves." Dershowitz can only rely on Morris the neo-Likudnik by twisting the evidence and interpreta-

did "not include maliciously false information." Since he has not released the full texts, the best we can do is judge these letters by how they were understood by their recipients.

UC Press Director Lynne Withey, in an interview with *Inside Higher Ed*, characterized them as an effort to "stop publication of the book." In an account of the affair in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Finkelstein's editor concluded, "the [legal] threat to the press was real." The *Los Angeles Times* quoted Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's legal adviser's reply to one of Dershowitz's letters soliciting "the Governor's assistance in preventing publication of this book." If Dershowitz really wants to clear the air, he should release the full text of these letters and let the rest of us ascertain his intent.

Having failed to prevent publication of *Beyond Chutzpah*, Dershowitz is now fighting a desperate, rear-guard action to discourage people from reading it. His

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# Might the Arabs Have a Point?

Karen Hughes, President Bush's newest undersecretary of state for public diplomacy and the caretaker of America's image abroad, has her work cut out for her.

A Zogby survey of 3,900 Arabs in Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates has uncovered massive distrust of U.S. motives in the Middle East.

Unkindest cut of all, Arabs would prefer that President Chirac and France lead the world rather than us, and, rather than have us as the world's lone superpower, they would prefer the Chinese.

While Arabs are not as rabidly anti-American as in the aftermath of the Iraq invasion, still, by 77 percent to 6 percent, they believe the Iraqi people are worse off today, and by four-to-one, Arabs say the U.S. invasion has increased, not decreased, terrorism.

Designed by Arab scholar Shibley Telhami of the Brookings Institution, the survey reveals pervasive cynicism about the stated goals of George W. Bush. When asked, "When you consider American objectives in the Middle East, what factors do you think are important to the United States?" the Arab answers came as follows:

Fully 76 percent said the Americans are there for the oil, 68 percent said to protect Israel, 63 percent to dominate the region, and 59 percent to weaken the Muslim world. Only 6 percent said we were there to protect human rights and another 6 percent said to promote democracy. Asked directly if they believe President Bush when he says democracy is our goal, two of every three Arabs, 78 percent in Egypt, said that, no, they do not believe Bush.

Asked to name the two nations that present the greatest threat to regional peace, 70 percent named Israel, 63 percent the United States, and 11 percent Britain. Only 6 percent named our *bête noire* Iran.

Asked to name the foreign leader they disliked most, Sharon swept top honors with 45 percent. Bush took the silver with 30 percent. No one else was close. Tony Blair came in a weak third. Only 3 percent of the Arabs detest him most.

While only 6 percent agreed with al-Qaeda's aim to establish an Islamic state and only 7 percent approve of its methods, 20 percent admire the way al-Qaeda "stood up for Muslim causes" and 36 percent admire how it "confronts the U.S."

Favorite news source? Sixty-five percent named Al-Jazeera either as their favorite or second favorite. What Fox News is to red-state America, Al-Jazeera is to the Arab street.

America's standing in the Arab world could hardly be worse. And the questions the survey raises are these: Do we care? And, if we do, do not the Arabs have a point? Has not U.S. behavior in the Middle East lent credence to the view that our principal interests are Israel and oil, and, under Bush II, that we launched an invasion to dominate the region?

After all, before liberating Kuwait, Secretary of State Baker said the coming war was about "o-i-l." And while we sent half a million troops to rescue that nation of 1.5 million, we sent none to Rwanda, where perhaps that many people were massacred.

If Kuwait did not sit on an underground sea of oil, would we have gone in? Is our military presence in the Mideast unrelated to its control of two-thirds of the world's oil reserves?

If human rights is our goal, why have we not gone into Darfur, the real hell-hole of human rights? If democracy is what we are fighting for, why did we not invade Cuba, a dictatorship, 90 miles away, far more hostile to America than Saddam's Iraq, and where human rights have been abused for half a century? Saddam never hosted nuclear missiles targeted at U.S. cities.

And is Israel not our fair-haired boy? Though Sharon & Co. have stomped on as many UN resolutions as Saddam Hussein ever did, they have pocketed \$100 billion in U.S. aid and are now asking for a \$2 billion bonus this year, Katrina notwithstanding. Anyone doubt they will get it?

Though per capita income in Israel is probably 20 times that of the Palestinians, Israel gets the lion's share of economic aid. And though they have flipped off half a dozen presidents to plant half a million settlers in Arab East Jerusalem and the West Bank, have we ever imposed a single sanction on Israel? Has Bush ever raised his voice to Ariel Sharon? And when you listen to the talking heads and read the columns of the neocon press, is it unfair to conclude that, yes, they would like to dump over every regime that defies Bush or Sharon?

Empathy, a capacity for participating in another's feelings or ideas, is indispensable to diplomacy. Carried too far, as it was by the Brits in the 1930s, it can lead to appeasement. But an absence of empathy can leave statesmen oblivious as to why their nation is hated, and with equally fateful consequences. ■

[wars and rumors of wars]

## Syria In Their Sights

The neocons plan their next “cakewalk.”

By Robert Dreyfuss

IT'S HAPPENING AGAIN. It all sounds depressingly familiar, and it is. The Bush administration accuses the leader of a major Arab country of supporting terrorism and harboring weapons of mass destruction. The stable of neoconservative pundits begins beating the drums of war. American forces begin massing on the country's border, amid ominous talk of cross-border attacks. Top U.S. officials warn that American patience with the country's leader is running out, and the United States imposes economic sanctions unilaterally. There are threats about taking the whole thing to the United Nations Security Council. And, in Washington, an exile leader with questionable credentials begins making the rounds of official Washington and finds doors springing open at the Pentagon, the National Security Council, and at Elizabeth Cheney's shop at the State Department.

This time it is Syria. The pressure is on, and it will likely get a lot worse very soon. On Dec. 15, the second installment of the report by a UN team investigating the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri is delivered. The first report, released in October, implicated several members of President Bashar Assad's family in the Hariri murder, though without hard evidence. It would be wrong, however, to see the Bush administration's campaign against Syria only through the lens of the Hariri

case. Like the attack on Iraq, it is a long-standing vendetta.

Three years ago, the U.S. invasion of Iraq was widely viewed as the first chapter of a region-wide strategy to redraw the entire map of the Middle East. After Iraq, Syria and Iran would be the next targets, after which the oil-rich states of the Arabian Gulf, including Saudi Arabia, would follow. It was a policy driven by neoconservatives in and out of the Bush administration, and they didn't exactly make an effort to keep it secret. In April 2003, in an article in *The American Prospect* entitled “Just the Beginning,” I wrote, “Those who think that U.S. armed forces can complete a tidy war in Iraq, without the battle spreading beyond Iraq's borders, are likely to be mistaken.” The article quoted various neocon strategists who sought precisely that. Among them was Michael Ledeen, the arch-Machiavellian and Iran-Contra manipulator-in-chief, who argued from his perch at the American Enterprise Institute: “I think we're going to be obliged to fight a regional war, whether we want to or not. As soon as we land in Iraq, we're going to face the whole terrorist network. It may turn out to be a war to remake the world.”

Since then, of course, the conventional wisdom has evolved in a rather different direction. As the war in Iraq bogged down, and as a public outcry developed against the neoconservatives

over the bungled war, the belief took hold that the United States had bitten off more than it could chew in Iraq—so that Syria, Iran, and the rest of President Bush's evildoers can rest easy. According to this theory, the United States no longer has the stomach, or the capability, to spread the war beyond Iraq as originally intended. Our troops are stretched too thin, our allies are reining us in, and cooler heads are prevailing in Washington—or so the theory goes.

But the news from Syria shows that the conventional wisdom is wrong. The United States is indeed pursuing a hard-edged regime-change strategy for Syria. And it isn't necessarily going to be a Cold War—in fact, it could well get very hot very soon. In Washington, analysts disagree over exactly how far the Bush administration is willing to go in pursuing its goal of overthrowing the Assad government. In the view of Flynt Leverett, a former CIA Syria analyst now at the Brookings Institution, the White House favors a kind of slow-motion toppling. In a forum at Brookings, Leverett, author of *Inheriting Syria: Bashar's Trial by Fire*, announced his conclusion that Bush was pursuing “regime change on the cheap” in Syria. But others disagree, and believe that Syria could indeed be the next Iraq. For neoconservatives, 'tis a consummation devoutly to be wished. For the rest of us—watching the war in Iraq unfold in horror, lurching

toward breakup and civil war—the prospect ought to be both tragic and alarming.

Having ridded itself of one of its own inside neoconservatives, reporter Judith Miller—who once co-authored a book with the always apoplectic Laurie Mylroie, the originator of the novel idea that Saddam Hussein was behind the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing—the *New York Times* now warns correctly that any chance for positive change in Syria can only occur “if President Bush rejects the counsel of neoconservative advisers who have learned nothing from Iraq and now dream of overthrowing Mr. Assad with unilateral force.” So far, at least, there is no sign that the president has rejected them at all.

The fall of the Assad regime could open Syria, and the region, to widespread instability. “No one knows what is going to come out of it,” says Wayne White, the former deputy director of the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research on Middle East issues. “It’s making me nervous. What, exactly, is ‘Syria’? There are cleavages there. The place could just break up.” White says that no one knows the extent to which Sunni Islamic radicals have organized themselves in Syria, especially through the Muslim Brotherhood. “There could be a lot more Islamic militancy there than we’re aware of.”

For Assad, none of this is exactly a surprise. On March 1, 2003, as U.S. forces massed for the attack on Iraq, Assad addressed an emergency summit meeting of the Arab League. “We are all targeted,” he said. “We are all in danger.”

On Oct. 6, in his saber-rattling declaration of war against “Islamofascism,” President Bush not-so-subtly warned Syria that it might be next. “State sponsors [of terrorism] like Syria and Iran have a long history of collaboration with terrorists, and they deserve no patience from the victims of terror,” said Bush,

speaking to the National Endowment for Democracy. “The United States makes no distinction between those who commit acts of terror and those who support and harbor them, because they’re equally as guilty of murder. Any government that chooses to be an ally of terror has also chosen to be an enemy of civilization. And the civilized world must hold those regimes to account.” Echoing Bush, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad warned bluntly that “our patience is running out with Syria,” and like other U.S. officials Khalilzad blamed the Assad government for America’s troubles in Iraq.

Just before the president spoke, according to Knight Ridder, senior Bush administration officials met in a high-level powwow to discuss U.S. options for dealing with Syria. Among the alternatives reportedly discussed at the meeting was “limited military action,” and despite the fact that intelligence on Syria’s actual role in supporting the resistance in Iraq is hazy at best, the story, by reporter Warren Strobel, revealed that “one option under consideration was bombing several villages 30 to 40 miles inside Syria that some officials believe have been harboring Iraqi insurgents.” On Oct. 15, the *New York Times* reported that the Bush administration was threatening “hot pursuit” and other attacks into Syrian territory. It added, “A series of clashes in the last year between American and Syrian troops, including a prolonged firefight this summer that killed several Syrians, has raised the prospect that cross-border military operations may become a dangerous new front in the Iraq war, according to current and former military and government officials.”

Over the past several weeks, U.S. forces in Iraq have conducted massive air and ground attacks in cities along the Iraq-Syria border, in a sweeping offensive in advance of the Dec. 15 election in

Iraq. In Syria—whose military is already in turmoil over its hurried evacuation from Lebanon and whose government is rattled to the core because of charges that top Syrian officials may have been involved in the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri—the prospect of a second front along its eastern border is raising alarm. Although intelligence analysts assert that Syria could weather a series of limited strikes along its border without undue consequences for the regime, in fact such attacks could have unforeseen results, even if they don’t presage a wider war by the United States. Still, in his *Washington Post* online column “Early Warning,” William M. Arkin wrote on Nov. 8 that the U.S. Central Command has been “directed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to prepare a ‘strategic concept’ for Syria, the first step in the creation of a full-fledged war plan.”

The wider war that the Bush administration seems to be pursuing was telegraphed long ago by the various neocon pundits and prognosticators. Charles Krauthammer used his *Washington Post* column in March to suggest that the way to advance the “glorious, delicate, revolutionary moment in the Middle East” is to go after Syria. “This is no time to listen to the voices of tremulousness, indecision, compromise, and fear,” he wrote. Instead, the Bush administration’s commitment to spreading democracy should take it “through Beirut to Damascus.” William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard* and co-author of *The War in Iraq* (“The mission begins in Baghdad, but it does not end there”), helpfully suggested some options that the Bush administration is clearly thinking about now. In *The Weekly Standard* last year, Kristol wrote, “We could bomb Syrian military facilities; we could go across the border in force to stop infiltration; we could occupy the town of Abu Kamal in eastern Syria, a few miles



from the border, which seems to be the planning and organizing center for Syrian activities in Iraq; we could covertly help or overtly support the Syrian opposition. ... It's time to get serious about dealing with Syria as part of winning in Iraq, and in the broader Middle East."

All that is consistent with the neocons' long-held view about Syria and the region. For years they've been calling for regime change in Syria, which was a major target in the now infamous paper written a decade ago by Richard Perle, Douglas Feith, David Wurmser, and others entitled "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," prepared as a study-group project for Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In it, the authors called for "striking Syrian military targets in Lebanon, and should that prove insufficient, striking at select targets in Syria proper" as a "prelude to a redrawing of the map of the Middle East which would threaten Syria's territorial integrity." Wurmser, a former AEI Middle East specialist, played a key role in the Pentagon's Office of Special Plans, which helped Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld

which was passed by Congress and signed into law in 2003. It was SALSA that set into motion the Bush administration's current squeeze on Syria, beginning with limited U.S. economic sanctions on Damascus triggered by the act. One of the chief problems with SALSA, which was opposed by just about all of the foreign-policy professionals in the State Department and among Middle East experts, is that it created a slow-motion confrontation with Syria precisely at the moment when the United States most needed Syrian co-operation both in the war against Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda and in helping to stabilize Iraq. "In Iraq, the two countries we most need the help of are Syria and Iran," says Chas W. Freeman. "We're not trying to involve them. We're trying to up the ante by confronting Syria and Iran."

Wesley Clark, a retired Army general who served as supreme allied commander in Europe, wants to see the United States engage Syria in a diplomatic dialogue. "The very last thing we need to do is to engage in hot-pursuit raids into Syria," he says.

The fact is, after 2001, Syria worked closely with the United States in tracking down al-Qaeda cells and, according

Syria expert. "While I was serving on the National Security Council, this information let U.S. and allied authorities thwart planned operations that, had they been carried out, would have resulted in the deaths of Americans."

Even after the war in Iraq, while some U.S. officials threatened Syria for its alleged, but unproven, support for Iraqi resistance groups, other U.S. officials worked to establish better relations between Washington and Damascus. It isn't hard to guess which was which: the Bush administration's neocons wanted a showdown with Syria, while the realists at the CIA and the State Department sought a settlement. The prospects of a U.S.-Syria deal reached their high-water mark in September 2004. During that period, top U.S. officials, including William Burns of the State Department, visited Syria to talk about getting Syria's help in shutting down the Syria-Iraq border, establishing joint U.S.-Syrian border patrols, and providing Syria with high-tech surveillance gear to help stop the infiltration of Islamist radicals into Iraq. There were rumors everywhere, too, about Syrian-Israeli peace talks over the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. And Secretary of State Colin Powell, visiting the region, went so far as to praise what he saw as "positive" news from Syria. "I sense," he said, "a new attitude from the Syrians." So obvious was the effort that *Time* magazine published a story entitled "Cozying Up to Syria," an idea that seems quaint now.

That all came to a crashing end a few days later after an assassination that stunned the world—no, not Hariri's, but the murder of Izzedine Sheik Khalil, a top official of Hamas, apparently by Israel's Mossad, in a huge car bomb in Damascus. It was the latest in a string of Israeli provocations against Syria, including the killing of a Hamas leader in Beirut, an Israeli air force strike at a Palestinian training camp outside Damascus, and

KRISTOL WROTE, "IT'S TIME TO GET **SERIOUS ABOUT DEALING WITH SYRIA AS PART OF WINNING IN IRAQ**, AND IN THE BROADER MIDDLE EAST."

manufacture false intelligence to justify the war in Iraq. Wurmser is currently an aide on Vice President Cheney's national-security staff.

In 1997, the same circle—Perle, Feith, Ledeen, Wurmser, et al.—created the U.S. Committee for a Free Lebanon. The USCFL—like the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, which involved the same cast of characters—lobbied hard for the so-called Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Act (SALSA),

to former U.S. intelligence officials, Syrian intelligence was very helpful. (Perhaps even too helpful, since the United States apparently "rendered" suspects captured in the war on terrorism to Damascus for less-than-civil interrogation by Syrian authorities.) "In the aftermath of 9/11, Syria provided the United States with actionable intelligence on al Qaeda affiliates, as administration officials publicly acknowledge," wrote Flynt Leverett, the former CIA

Israeli overflights that buzzed the Assad family's home in Latakia. Not without reason, Syria's Foreign Minister Farouq Sharaa charged that the Israeli assassination was meant specifically to disrupt the progress in U.S.-Syrian relations. And so it did.

Not coincidentally, the end of the thaw in relations between Washington and Damascus occurred as the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1559, aimed at putting pressure on Syria to end its presence in Lebanon. Along with SALSA, Resolution 1559—which followed a stupid and clumsy attempt by Assad to extend the presidency of the pro-Syrian President Emile Lahoud of Lebanon—set into motion the train of events that led to Hariri's assassination on Valentine's Day 2005. By October 2004, a full-blown crisis between the United States and Syria was underway. Even the *Washington Post* began calling for war. "Syria's government has been a longtime sponsor of terrorism, a stockpiler of missiles and chemical weapons, and an unapologetic ally of Islamic extremists; it has allowed hundreds, if not thousands, of insurgents to stream across its borders to fight U.S. forces in Iraq," thundered the *Post*, though utterly wrong about nearly every one of its charges. Concluded the *Post*, the United States could no longer tolerate Syria and had to consider "breaking off of relations [and] military retaliation."

Since then, the United States has moved closer and closer to war with Syria. In this history-as-farce rerun of the war with Iraq, there is even a Syrian Ahmad Chalabi, namely Farid al-Ghadry, the founder of the exile Reform Party of Syria, which is mixing it up with a varying cast of characters among Syrian exiles and reformers, from those with democratic ideals all the way to Syria's Muslim Brotherhood. Earlier this year, Ghadry and a cohort of allies won an audience with a gaggle of top U.S. offi-

cials from the State Department, the National Security Council, and the Defense Department.

Virtually no one believes that Ghadry, a U.S. businessman, has any future in Syria. But the astonishing thing about the Bush administration's destabilization of the Syrian regime is that no one in Washington has any idea who or what might emerge to replace Assad's government. Asked to guess, most intelligence analysts throw up their hands. Some argue that the most likely heir to a post-Assad Syria would be the Muslim Brotherhood, an underground secret society

the long desert border between Syria and Iraq, and he added that the United States had failed to control the Iraqi side. "There is nobody on the Iraqi side, neither Americans nor Iraqis," said Assad. (Amanpour was unmoved. "Why cannot your forces go house to house? Why cannot you actively stop this, close it down?") "We are interested in a more stable Iraq," insisted Assad. "[The United States] only talks about a stable Iraq, but the mistakes they make there every day give the opposite result."

Imad Moustapha, Syria's ambassador to the United States, told the *Boston*

#### BY OCTOBER 2004, A FULL-BLOWN CRISIS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SYRIA WAS UNDERWAY. EVEN THE *WASHINGTON POST* BEGAN CALLING FOR WAR.

that has long been at war with the regime in Syria, ever since President Hafez Assad inaugurated a new constitution in the early 1970s that proclaimed Syria to be a secular, socialist republic. But Syria, a nation of just 18 million people, has as many as two million Christians, two million Kurds, and many other non-Sunni minorities—including the ruling Alawite group, to which the family of the president and his chief backers belong. As a result, Syria would not be ruled easily by Muslim Brotherhood-style Islamists.

Meanwhile, the UN investigation into Hariri's murder is a ticking time bomb for Assad. Already beset by the conflict with Israel, the war in Iraq, and a crisis in Lebanon, Bashar Assad will have to summon all the wiliness of his late father to survive the next few months. In an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour—who, in parroting the White House line, seemed to be auditioning to reprise the role of Judy Miller in this Middle East war—Assad plaintively pointed out that there is little that Syria can do to stop insurgents from crossing

*Globe* in November that the United States recently refused yet another proposal from Syria to revive co-operation with Damascus on intelligence. "What we see in general is an administration that is categorically refusing to engage with Syria on any level," said Moustapha. "We see an administration that would really love to see another crisis in the Middle East, this time targeting Syria. ... Even before the Iraq war started, they had this grand vision for the Middle East."

Less grand is the vision of Bill O'Reilly, the Fox News host, who ripped a page from Pat Robertson's assassination handbook. "It's Bashar's life," said O'Reilly on Oct. 5. "I mean, we could take his life, and we should take his life if he doesn't help us out." ■

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*Robert Dreyfuss is the author of Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam. He covers national security for Rolling Stone and writes frequently for The American Prospect, The Nation, and Mother Jones.*

# Declare Victory and Stay

Bush has yet to join the reality-based community.

By Scott McConnell

MANY WHO WATCHED President Bush's Iraq speech at the Naval Academy had one main question in mind. It didn't concern what the president would say—the “stay the course” message had been leaked beforehand: we would remain in Iraq until “victory” was achieved. The real curiosity was about the president's mental state, about how close to reality he and his advisors were. Months before Bush invaded Iraq, a White House senior advisor told reporter Ron Suskind that he (Suskind) was part of “what we call the reality-based community” but “that's not the way the world really works anymore.” “We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities. ... We're history's actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do.”

What the Bush administration did—creating a new reality—was to invade Iraq with scarcely a tissue of international support after feeding the American people and the world community a farrago of false or hyped-up reports disguised as intelligence.

Of course, Bush and his team read the polls sufficiently to know that some appearance of mastering the situation is needed. But is the White House able to gauge and respond rationally to the new circumstances? Is it inclined to rejoin the “reality-based community”?

Several weeks ago, *Insight* published a report claiming that Bush was increasingly isolated, estranged from Karl Rove, angry at his father as a result of Brent Scowcroft's interview in *The New Yorker* and no longer speaking to him except on

family occasions. His circle of consultation had shrunk down to Condi Rice, his mom, Karen Hughes, and wife Laura. Perhaps the report was exaggerated or even mistaken. But then several weeks later, Seymour Hersh—renowned for the quality of his Washington sources—reported that Bush had become more detached, leaving more issues to Rove and Cheney. “They keep him in the gray world of religious idealism, where he wants to be anyway,” said Hersh's informant. His appearances are increasingly limited to audiences that are guaranteed to be non-critical. Lyndon Johnson was similarly constrained when the public turned against the Vietnam War, but the difference, said Hersh's informant, was that “Johnson knew he was a prisoner in the White House, but Bush has no idea.”

Bush at the Naval Academy was clearly not Richard Nixon, facing the cameras in primetime while seated in the Oval Office, soberly laying out his plan to extricate the United States “with honor” from a war he didn't initiate. Nixon was never able to persuade the already alienated to back his Vietnamization program, but the speeches were substantive, serious. Until Watergate crippled him, he was able to keep a political majority behind his policy—whatever the costs in U.S. casualties.

Bush, by contrast, chose a podium that evoked the imperial, a massive backdrop of blue and bright gold (his tie matched), the Naval Academy seal blown up to serve as an icon for the message of the day: “Plan for Victory.” As in a new product launch, repetition was key: the word “victory” was used 15 times, the golden “Plan for Victory” logo

lined up in rows, sure to dominate every camera angle. A Duke University political scientist hired by the White House stressed that professing that “victory” was our goal was crucial to maintaining public support for war. “Freedom” was apparently demoted, Bush deploying the word a mere eight times during his peroration.

As for content, might it have been a nod to reality to acknowledge that the enemy is comprised of Saddamists, terrorists, and the White House neologism, “rejectionists”? The latter coinage refers to ethnic Sunnis moved to revolt because they don't like foreigners invading their country. Bush had never before admitted that any faction of the Iraqi resistance could be motivated by normal human emotions, but apparently the fact that U.S. Army commanders are reaching out to the Sunni population, even those known to be supporting the resistance, has penetrated the Bush bubble.

In the end, the only goal admitted was a free Iraq, an outpost of democracy that will be the first domino in the Arab world. It is, like all the Wilsonian slogans that have come from the White House, a pretty idea, something that would very nice if it had the slightest chance of coming true in the real world. It doesn't.

What is coming true is an intensifying dirty war between armed tribal militias, interrupted occasionally by elections. The main motivation for much of the insurgency is the American occupation—which has become a global recruiting tool for al-Qaeda, probably the only thing in the world that could tempt Ba'athist military officers to make common cause with jihadist terrorists.



What is also coming true is the degradation of the U.S. military, through slowing recruitment and the retirement of experienced officers. Congressman John Murtha, a decorated veteran, probably the figure more trusted by the military than anyone else in Congress, has been told for months that the Army is being broken in Iraq and that the longer the war goes on, the more serious and difficult repairing the damage will be.

There is no good way out—and certainly no path to victory. Iraqi ethnic militias will do battle whether we leave in six months or 10 years. The U.S. Army may well have to fight its way out, as the Israeli military historian Martin Van Creveld recently suggested, America's high-tech equipment being too valuable to be left to the Iraqis as aircraft and armor were left to the South Vietnamese 32 years ago. An American presence in the region will be necessary, perhaps, as the University of Pennsylvania's Ian Lustick has written, through the mechanism of the UN in conjunction with other great powers. Bush has so estranged America from the real world of diplomacy that many—even on Capitol Hill—have forgotten that no country has an interest in allowing Iraq to become a base for jihadism.

Bush's speech affirmed that his administration has not begun to contemplate such alternatives. The president offered no timetable for withdrawal, conveyed no hint of thinking of Iraq in any terms but as a "beacon of freedom." This rhetoric, rousing to a dwindling core of supporters, is detached from military and economic reality. It confirms that the Bush presidency is incapable of taking steps to limit the damage that it has caused. Only a president who can acknowledge that the invasion was a terrible mistake can formulate a new policy. Three years from now, the hole America has dug itself into will be that much deeper—and that much more difficult to escape. ■

### **The liberation of Iraq to end oppression of the Iraqi people has not been altogether successful.**

Iraqi Deputy Human Rights Minister Aida USSayran has courageously confirmed that Iraqi officials have been torturing and abusing prisoners in jails across the country. According to USSayran, the Human Rights Ministry found that women were frequently being arrested without cause and then raped by male guards. One woman said she had been raped seven times on the top floor of the Interior Ministry, which is the location of the ministry's intelligence offices. USSayran's comments came two weeks after 169 men who had been tortured were discovered by U.S. forces in a south-central Baghdad building also run by the Interior Ministry. The men, mostly Sunni Arabs, reportedly had been beaten with leather belts and steel rods, crammed into tiny rooms, and forced to sit in their own excrement. A senior U.S. military source reports that the abuse wasn't an isolated incident and is likely common in Iraqi-run prisons. On Dec. 4, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Peter Pace publicly disputed Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's judgment that the U.S. could do nothing about abuses by the Iraqi government except file a written complaint. Pace disagreed, saying it was the obligation of U.S. military personnel to intervene and stop any torture that they witness. Rumsfeld was not pleased with Pace's comments.



### **The Bosnian police have determined that local Islamic militants were about to carry out a suicide bombing,**

sparkling fears that the tactic will be used more extensively in Western Europe. Suicide vests and an arsenal of other weapons were seized during a raid on an apartment in the Ilidza suburb near the airport in Sarajevo, as well as home-made videos featuring several potential suicide bombers asking God for forgiveness for their impending "sacrifice." Two teenage would-be bombers, one a Bosnian Muslim living in Sweden and the other a Turk living in Denmark, were arrested. The police believe that Western European Muslims, who carry European Union passports enabling them to travel freely, are now being actively recruited and trained for suicide attacks.



### **Vice President Dick Cheney is orchestrating opposition to turning over to the Senate Intelligence Committee's investigators the CIA-produced Sept. 21, 2001 Presidential Daily Brief.**

Cheney is citing security concerns in his attempt to stop the further dissemination of any and all intelligence reports that could embarrass the White House. The brief, which included the most up to date and reliable intelligence, explicitly denied any credible linkage between Saddam Hussein and either 9/11 or al-Qaeda. Even after receiving the CIA report, Cheney and the Pentagon publicly continued to insist that Saddam and al-Qaeda were connected and that Iraq might have played a role in 9/11. While the always compliant Senate Intelligence Chairman Pat Roberts is working to limit the political damage from his committee's investigation, much of the incriminating information will almost certainly be leaked by Democratic senators on the committee. Some Republican senators with presidential ambitions also could turn against the White House on this issue.

*Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates.*

# Painting the White House Red

Radical globalist ideology has possessed the occupant of the Oval Office and is bringing about the revolution Communism never could.

By John Laughland

IT IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED that George Orwell's *Animal Farm* predicted not only the horrors of communism but also the end of the Cold War. At the end of the fable, the farmer, who symbolizes the capitalist West, returns to the farm and plays cards with the pigs, who symbolize communism. The shivering creatures outside, symbolizing ordinary people, "looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which."

We normally think of the end of the Cold War as having marked the unambiguous victory of capitalism over communism. But has Orwell's prediction proved right, and has there instead been a convergence of the two? We hear much about how former communist states are Westernizing, but has this process been bought with the price of our own subjection to what used to be communist ideals?

Take revolution, for instance, a key Marxist concept. Fifteen years ago, it still carried—at least for conservatives—the negative connotations of "Bolshevik," "sexual," and "French." Now, by contrast, George W. Bush has elevated the promotion of "a global democratic revolution" to the central goal of U.S. foreign policy. In his second inaugural speech, he announced nothing less than a program of political emancipation for the whole planet—he said that America was pursuing "the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our

world." Trotsky would have been proud.

Revolution has now become a completely positive word in the Western political lexicon. Recent years have seen a spate of "people power" revolutions, especially in Eastern Europe. Perhaps authoritarian regimes, rather like the walls of Jericho, really are brought tumbling down by the chanting of a John Lennon song, but it often turns out that things were not as spontaneous as was claimed at the time. In the case of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine last year, it is now a matter of public record that the U.S. poured huge sums into the campaign of Viktor Yushchenko and that the Ukrainian KGB was also heavily involved on the Americans' side, playing a key role in stage-managing the whole charade. Nonetheless, the myth of revolution now wields such a strong hold over the Western mind that, with the compulsiveness of children who beg to be retold the same story, we regularly accept these fairy tales at face value.

Prior to the fall of communism, "revolution" and "people power" were considered just leftish propaganda. We dismissed the Soviet regime's appeal to its own founding event as grotesque political kitsch, masking the sinister reality of power machinations behind the scenes. Now we seem to have become more naïve and have started to take two-dimensional archetypes about "the people" seriously. This is because the West has fallen in love with the myth of

revolution. Chairman Mao once said, "Marxism consists of a thousand truths but they all boil down to one sentence: 'It is right to rebel.'" That sentiment now forms a central tenet of Western political orthodoxy and U.S. foreign policy.

George W. Bush is not, of course, a closet Marxist. But many of his closest advisors, especially the neoconservatives, do have post-Trotskyite backgrounds. The original Marxist plan was for the socialist revolution to engulf the whole planet, and this plan was embraced by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. It famously came up against the buffers of Stalin's alternative proposal to build socialism in one country first. In exile, Trotsky kept the idea of world revolution going by setting up the Fourth International in 1938. Within two years, Irving Kristol—the man who was later to be the founding father of the neoconservative movement that so dominates the Bush administration—joined it. Irving Kristol never renounced or condemned his Trotskyite past: in 1983, he wrote that he was still proud of it. Likewise, in 1996, Michael Ledeen of the American Enterprise Institute—one of the leading ideologues of the war on terror—coined the phrase "global democratic revolution" in the subtitle of a book in which he attacked Bill Clinton for being a "counter-revolutionary." The book's title, *Freedom Betrayed*, is an obvious allusion to Trotsky's own 1938 account of his break with Stalin, *The Revolution Betrayed*.

Indeed, when President George H.W. Bush enthusiastically proclaimed the New World Order in his speech to Congress on Sept. 11, 1990 he was in fact using a phrase that had re-entered the political lexicon in the late 1980s purely thanks to Soviet leaders. Bush senior was eagerly heralding the imminent enforcement of international law—specifically, a United Nations Security Council resolution—by military might. “We’re now in sight of a United Nations that performs as envisioned by its founders,” he said. But this was exactly what the USSR wanted, as it struggled to disentangle itself from its Stalinist heritage. On Dec. 7, 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev—who once said he was going back to Marx and Lenin after the excesses of Stalinism in the same way as modern Catholics were going back to Jesus and the Bible after Richelieu and Mazarin—used the phrase “new world order” when he called for an end to the division of the world economy into different blocs, on the grounds that there was in reality only one world economy, and for the United Nations to assume a central role in world peacekeeping.

Although we normally think of the administration of George W. Bush, and the neoconservatives who surround him, as being viscerally hostile to the United Nations, the fact is that the 1991 Gulf War of Bush senior and the 2003 one of Bush junior are seamlessly linked. Both father and son justified their respective wars in the name of the very same United Nations Security Council resolutions, George W. Bush most recently in his speech on Veterans Day. Bush junior, in other words, adheres to the same internationalist dogma as his father. He has repeatedly said that the purpose of the Iraq War was to save the UN’s credibility: on Nov. 19, 2003 in London, Bush said, “America and Great Britain have done, and will do, all in their power to prevent the

United Nations from solemnly choosing its own irrelevance and inviting the fate of the League of Nations.” He said he was determined that the UN become an instrument of “our collective security.” In saying this, Bush junior was expressing the same one-world, pro-UN sentiment that Gorbachev’s foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, had advanced in his seminal speech to the 42nd session of the General Assembly in 1987. All talk of “collective security” during the Cold War had been completely off the agenda, yet Shevardnadze crucially used this very phrase when he first proposed that the Cold War be ended by giving the UN its own “peacekeeping force” under the direct command of the Security Council.

If such comparisons seem outlandish, it is precisely because we in the West have failed to grasp the true nature of Marxism-Leninism. This may be because we tend to think of communism as being only about state ownership of the means of production and the command economy. In fact, Karl Marx himself advocated neither. Instead, the true core of

*New Class*, that the key to communist ideology was the belief in the primacy of matter and the reality of change.

Because permanent revolution was the natural state of reality, and hence of politics, Marx, Engels, and Lenin reasoned that all fixed forms of political association, especially the state, were oppressive, and that men would not be free until the state itself had “withered away.” It was this withering away of the state that all the leading Marxists identified with communism itself. Lenin wrote, “So long as the state exists, there is no freedom. When there will be freedom, there will be no state.” Emancipation, revolution, and internationalism were all aspects of the same thing.

How was this withering away of the state to occur? For Marx and Engels, the answer was clear: world capitalism would do the trick. The two authors of *The Communist Manifesto* eulogized the unstoppable revolutionary force of what we now call “globalization” and what Mikhail Gorbachev called the “one world economy.” “All fixed, fast-frozen

**BUSH SENIOR WAS EAGERLY HERALDING THE IMMINENT ENFORCEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW—SPECIFICALLY, UNITED NATIONS’ SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION—BY MILITARY MIGHT.**

Marxist-Leninist doctrine, according to Alexander Solzhenitsyn, was the ideology of dialectical materialism. Derived from Hegel and ultimately Heraclitus, this doctrine—on which Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin all wrote extensively—holds that the world is in a constant state of flux, that nothing is absolutely true or false, and that progress comes from the constant union of opposites. Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav communist intellectual who turned against the system, said in the opening paragraphs of his seminal work on communism, *The*

relations,” they enthused, “with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into the air, all that is holy is profaned.” According to dialectic reasoning, it was precisely the international, cosmopolitan nature of the bourgeoisie that would dissolve existing borders and social structures and thereby prepare the ground for the creation of a homogeneous international proletariat and the unification of humanity. “To the great



chagrin of Reactionists,” they wrote, “the bourgeoisie has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed. In place of the old local and national self-seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations.”

Marx and Engels were, in short, the first prophets of globalization. Engels was an early advocate of the concept of “creative destruction” later to be espoused by Michael Ledeen: “The disintegration of mankind into a mass of isolated, mutually repelling atoms,” Engels wrote, “means the destruction of all corporate, national and indeed of any particular interests and is the last necessary step towards the free and spontaneous association of men.” This is why he and Marx were in favor of free trade. In January 1948, Karl Marx told the Free Trade Congress in Brussels that “We are for Free Trade, because by Free Trade all economical laws, with their most

ster class in Moscow—rather as *pere-stroika* did in the late 1980s and privatization in the 1990s—and it involved the sale of state assets to foreigners. As Lenin himself told Armand Hammer at the end of August 1921, at the height of the first Soviet famine, “What we really need is American capital and technical aid to get our wheels turning once more.” When Milovan Djilas analyzed the apparent collapse of communism in his sequel, *The Fall of the New Class*, he wrote, “Every Marxist, going back to Marx himself and forward past Lenin, regarded the creation of a world market and all that it brought about (strengthening each and every link among peoples, tearing down the barriers between nations, etc.) as a progressive fact of capitalism and a necessary condition for proletarian internationalism itself and the true convergence of peoples in socialism.”

It was not ideologically problematic, therefore, for serious communists to embrace the worldwide free market. Many realized that globalization and a

used this alleged withering away of the state to argue in favor of a one-world political regime, in which the particular interests of statehood would have to give way to the superior claims of the whole of humanity—in other words, what we now call “human rights.”

The concept of universal human rights now forms the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy. It is explicitly in the name of universal and international values that George W. Bush has made his various appeals in favor of the war on terror, including the attack on Iraq. Certain values, he has repeatedly alleged, are valid for all people, in all places, at all times. Like Marxists, he believes that economics and politics are guided by ineluctable and deterministic laws which will eventually force the whole world to follow one same political and economic path: “The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism,” he has written, “ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.” Laced as his language is with religious (often esoteric and even apocalyptic) vocabulary, the American president frequently says that freedom is God’s plan for mankind. Bush’s Messianic universalist political discourse recalls the Marxist movement that swept through Latin America in the 1970s, conjugating God and politics, that was known as “liberation theology.”

Other neoconservatives agree with the eminently Marxist notion that the U.S. is the providential bearer of a universal internationalist idea that will lead the world. Just as internationalism was a key Marxist tenet—the Soviet Union claimed that it was based on the friendship of peoples, both between the different peoples within its borders and also between it and its Warsaw Pact allies—so the commentator Ben Wattenberg applied the sobriquet “the first universal

**MARX AND ENGELS WERE, IN SHORT, THE FIRST PROPHETS OF GLOBALIZATION.**

**ENGELS WAS AN EARLY ADVOCATE OF THE CONCEPT OF “CREATIVE DESTRUCTION” LATER TO BE ESPOUSED BY MICHAEL LEDEEN.**

astounding contradictions, will act upon a larger scale, upon a greater extent of territory, upon the territory of the whole earth; and because from the uniting of all these contradictions into a single group, where they stand face to face, will result the struggle which will itself eventuate in the emancipation of the proletarians.”

Indeed, it was this Marxist theory about the revolutionary force of capitalism that allowed the early Bolsheviks to introduce the so-called New Economic Policy only four years after the revolution. Defended by both Lenin and Stalin, the NEP caused the emergence of a gang-

supranational international system offered them even more than that of which Trotsky had dreamed when he created the Fourth International. Many adapted the eminently Marxist argument that economic and technological developments were about to consign the sovereign state to the dustbin of history. Just as Marx had said, “The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord, the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist,” so Western ideologues of globalization claimed that the Internet and the fax machine had rendered the sovereign state obsolete. They then

nation” to America, specifically emphasizing that the U.S. embodied the cosmopolitan ideal of a country founded on an ideological concept and not on contingent things like the accidents of history, geography, or religion. Newt Gingrich linked America’s unique cosmopolitanism to its alleged right to lead the world: “No country has ever had the potential to lead the entire human race as America does today. No country has ever had as many people of as many different backgrounds call on it as we do today.” William Kristol and David Brooks have written, “American nationalism is that of an exceptional nation founded on a universal principle, on what Lincoln called ‘an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times.’” Most importantly of all, just as the Soviet Union specifically regarded international relations as an ideological battleground—in their case as a forum for prosecuting the international class struggle—and just as Michael Ledeen has written, “We are an ideological nation,” so George W. Bush said on Veterans Day that America is involved in “a global ideological struggle.”

It is his promise to emancipate the whole of mankind that so endears George W. Bush to a phalanx of former Marxist ideologues. People who in their youth idolized the worker “who has no country” have little difficulty idolizing today the global executive or the international bureaucrat. They identify with today’s cosmopolitan ideology of globalization and with George W. Bush’s internationalism. Christopher Hitchens has defended his own surprising support for the neoconservatives by saying, “I feel much more like I used to in the 1960s, working with revolutionaries,” and he understands that Bush’s policy of regime change is by definition going to be supported by revolutionaries: “It is right, I think, that conservatives oppose regime change: that is what conserva-

tives do.” Bush, by implication, is no conservative. In the same vein, Eric Hobsbawm, the veteran British Marxist historian, wrote at the end of June, “At least one passionate ex-Marxist supporter of Bush has told me, only half in jest: ‘After all, this is the only chance of supporting world revolution that looks like coming my way.’”

Support for world revolution also explains why 10 Eastern European heads of government—nearly all of

leaders so attacked are in fact old leftists like Slobodan Milosevic, Alexander Lukashenko, or Saddam Hussein.

In internal politics, the Marxist-Hegelian understanding of “civil society” has also become a central plank of Western thinking, at least for states the West wishes to control. In Eastern Europe, for instance, supposed “non-governmental organizations” are invariably presented as being more authentic and objective representatives of popular

#### IT IS HIS PROMISE TO **EMANCIPATE THE WHOLE OF MANKIND** THAT SO ENDEARS **GEORGE W. BUSH** TO A PHALANX OF **FORMER MARXIST IDEOLOGUES**.

them former communist apparatchiks—almost alone in the world lined up obediently to sign an open letter of support for the impending Iraq War in February 2003. “Dissidents” in Eastern Europe—broadly speaking, the people who are now in power—were not anti-communists at all, but instead “critical” Marxists who worked within the communist system to reform it, not destroy it. Bush’s announced fight “against tyranny” is of obvious appeal to those who used to rally around the old communist cry of “anti-fascism,” which in turn was largely a slogan expressing leftist hostility to the nation and the state, both of which are now deeply unpopular concepts in the West. Indeed, it is a striking indication of the dominance of left-wing modes of thought in the West that the supreme political insult in the new world order is “authoritarian.” Authority is, by definition, a conservative notion, yet without exception, every single political leader whom the West has removed or tried to remove in the last decade and a half has been tarred with the “authoritarian” or “nationalist” brush. It is as if these right-wing vices were the only political sins. This male-diction is bandied about even when the

opinion than the established, public, law-based structures of the state, rather as the “councils” or “soviets” were supposed to be spontaneous associations of ordinary folk. This belief persists even when the so-called NGOs are in fact front organizations funded by Western governments, in other words when they are in reality like Leninist cells—apparently uncoordinated and spontaneous but in reality highly disciplined and centrally-controlled.

The image at the end of *Animal Farm* illustrates a profound anthropological truth, which is that when people become obsessed by an enemy, and define themselves by their struggle against him, they end up resembling him. Violence being imitative, they become a sort of mirror image of their combatant. Perhaps the Cold War, which defined American foreign policy for four decades, has so corrupted the United States of America that it has become just that: the mirror image of the Soviet enemy that it believes it defeated. ■

*John Laughland is a London-based writer and lecturer and a trustee of the British Helsinki Human Rights Group.*

# Out of Africa

When the sun set on the British Empire, chaos overtook the former colonies.

By Theodore Dalrymple

AS SOON AS I qualified as a doctor, I went to Rhodesia, which was to transform itself into Zimbabwe five years later. In the next decade I worked and traveled a great deal in Africa and could not help but reflect upon the clash of cultures, the legacy of colonialism, and the practical effects of good intentions unadulterated by any grasp of reality. I gradually came to the conclusion that the rich and powerful can indeed have an effect upon the poor and powerless—perhaps even remake them but not necessarily (in fact, necessarily not) in the way they wanted or anticipated. The law of unintended consequences is stronger than the most absolute power.

Until my arrival at Bulawayo Airport, the British Empire had been for me principally a philatelic phenomenon. When I was young, Britain's still astonishing assortment of far-flung territories—from British Honduras and British Guiana to British North Borneo, Basutoland, Bechuanaland, and Swaziland—each issued beautiful engraved stamps with the queen's profile in the right upper corner, looking serenely down upon exotic creatures such as orangutans or frigate birds or upon natives going about their natively tasks, tapping rubber or climbing coconut palms. To my childish mind, any political entity that issued such desirable stamps must have been a power for good. And my father, a Communist by conviction, also encouraged me to read the works of G.A. Henty, late 19th-century adventure stories extolling the exploits of empire builders, who by bravery, sterling character, superior

intelligence, and *force majeure* overcame the resistance of such spirited but doomed peoples as the Zulu and the Fuzzy Wuzzies. Henty might seem an odd choice for a Communist to give his son, but Marx himself was an imperialist of a kind, believing that European colonialism was an instrument of progress toward History's happy denouement; only at a later stage, after it had performed its progressive work, was empire to be condemned.

And condemned Rhodesia most certainly was, loudly and insistently, as if it were the greatest threat to world peace and the security of the planet. I expected to find on my arrival, therefore, a country in crisis. Instead, I found a country that was thriving: its roads were well maintained, its transport system functioning, its cities manifesting a municipal pride long gone from England. The large hospital in which I was to work, while stark and somewhat lacking in comforts, was extremely clean and ran with exemplary efficiency. The staff had a vibrant *esprit de corps*, and the hospital had a reputation for the best of medical care. The rural poor would make immense and touching efforts to reach it: they arrived covered in the dust of their long journeys. The African nationalist leader and foe of the government, Joshua Nkomo, was a patient there and trusted the care implicitly, for medical ethics transcended all political antagonisms.

The surgeon for whom I worked, who came from England, was the best I have ever known and a man of exemplary character. Devoting his enormous technical

accomplishment to the humblest of patients, he seemed not only capable of every surgical procedure, but he was a brilliant diagnostician, his clinical intuition honed by a relative lack of high-tech aids. He saved hundreds every year and inspired the most absolute trust and confidence in his patients. He never panicked, even in the direst emergency, and he knew what to do when a man had been half eaten by a crocodile or mauled by a leopard, when a child had been bitten in the leg by a puff adder, or when a man appeared with a spear driven through his skull. When called in the early hours of the morning, he was as even-tempered as if attending a social event.

He was not a missionary, however. He was infused by nothing resembling a religious spirit, only by a profound medical ethic and an enthusiasm for his art and science. He wanted an interesting surgical practice, and he wanted to save human life. Rhodesia offered him ideal conditions for using his skills to maximum benefit. Within a short time of the political handover in 1980, however, he returned to England because the swift degeneration of standards at the hospital made the high-level practice of surgery impossible. The institution that had seemed to me on my arrival to be so solid and well founded fell apart in the historical twinkling of an eye.

In returning to England, he accepted a much-reduced standard of living. Talleyrand said that he who had not experienced the *ancien régime* (as an aristocrat, of course) knew nothing of the sweetness of life. The same might be



said of him who had not experienced life as a colonial in Africa. I, whose salary was by other standards small, lived at a level that I have scarcely equaled since. It is true that Rhodesia lacked many consumer goods at that time, due to economic sanctions, but what I learned from this lack is how little consumer goods add to the quality of life.

The real luxuries were space and beauty—and the time to enjoy them. With three doctors, I rented an elegant colonial house set in beautiful grounds tended by a garden “boy” called Moses (the “boy” in garden boy or houseboy implied no youth: once, in East Africa, I was served by a houseboy who was 94, who had lived in the same family for 70 years, and who would have seen the suggestion of retirement as insulting). Surrounding the house was a flagstone veranda where breakfast was served on linen in the cool of the morning, the soft light of the sunrise spreading through the foliage of the jacaranda trees; even the harsh cry of the go-away bird seemed grateful on the ear. It was the only time in my life when I have arisen from bed without a tinge of regret.

I have never worked harder, and I can still conjure up the heavy feeling in my head, as if it were full of lead shot and could snap off my neck under its own weight. The luxury of our life was this: that, our work once done, we never had to perform a single chore for ourselves. The rest of our time, in our most beautiful surroundings, was given over to friendship, sport, study, hunting—whatever we wished. Of course, our leisure rested upon a pyramid of startling inequality and social difference. The staff who freed us of life’s inconveniences lived an existence that was opaque to us, though they had quarters only a few yards from where we lived. Their hopes, wishes, fears, and aspirations were not ours; their beliefs, tastes, and customs were alien to us.

Our very distance made our relations with them unproblematic. We studiously avoided that tone of spoiled and bored querulousness for which colonials were infamous. We never resorted to that staple of colonial conversation, the servant problem, but were properly grateful. Like most of the people I met in Rhodesia, we tried to treat our staff well. In return, they treated us with genuine solicitude. We assuaged our consciences by telling ourselves what was no doubt true—that they would be worse off without our employ—but we couldn’t help feeling uneasy.

By contrast, our relations with our African medical colleagues were harder edged because the social, intellectual, and cultural distance between us was far reduced. Rhodesia was still a white-dominated society, but for reasons of practical necessity, and in a vain attempt to convince the world that it was not as monstrous as made out, it had produced a growing cadre of educated Africans. Unsurprisingly, they were not content to remain subalterns under the permanent tutelage of whites, so that our relations with them were superficially polite, but human warmth was difficult. The black doctors who earned the same salary as we whites could not achieve the same standard of living for a very simple reason: they had an immense number of social obligations. They were expected to provide for an ever-expanding circle of family members and people from their village, tribe, and province. An income that allowed a white to live like a lord scarcely raised a black above the level of his family. Mere equality of salary, therefore, was quite insufficient to procure for them the standard of living that they saw the whites had and that it was only human nature for them to believe themselves entitled to, on account of the superior talent that had allowed them to raise themselves above their fellows.

These obligations also explain the fact, often disdainfully remarked upon by former colonials, that when Africans moved into the beautiful villas of their former colonial masters, the houses swiftly degenerated into a species of superior, more spacious slum. The degeneration of colonial villas had nothing to do with the intellectual inability of Africans to maintain them. Rather, the fortunate inheritor of such a villa was soon overwhelmed by relatives and others who had a social claim upon him. They brought even their goats with them, and one goat can undo in an afternoon what it has taken decades to establish.

It is easy to see why a civil service, controlled in its upper reaches by whites, could remain efficient and uncorrupt but could not long do so when manned by Africans. The thick network of social obligations explains why, while it would have been out of the question to bribe most Rhodesian bureaucrats, in only a few years it would have been out of the question not to try to bribe most Zimbabwean ones, whose relatives would have condemned them for failing to obtain on their behalf all the advantages their official opportunities might provide. Thus do the very same tasks in the very same offices carried out by people of different cultural and social backgrounds result in very different outcomes. Viewed in this light, African nationalism was a struggle as much for power and privilege as it was for freedom, though it co-opted the language of freedom for political advantage.

Of course, the solidarity and inescapable social obligations that corrupted public and private administration in Africa also gave a unique charm and humanity to life and served to protect people from the worst consequences of the misfortunes that buffeted them. There were always relatives whose unquestioned duty it was to help and protect. Africans tend to find our lack of

such obligations puzzling and unfeeling—and they are not entirely wrong.

These considerations help explain the paradox that strikes so many visitors to Africa: the evident decency, kindness, and dignity of the ordinary people, and the fathomless iniquity, dishonesty, and ruthlessness of the politicians. This contrast recently struck me anew when a lawyer asked me to prepare a report on a Zimbabwean woman who had stayed illegally in England.

She was clearly in a disturbed state of mind. Mostly she looked down at the floor. When she looked up, her eyes seemed focused on infinity. She spoke hardly a word: her story was told me by her niece, a nurse who had fled to England some years before. During the war of “liberation,” her brother had enlisted in the Rhodesian army. One day the

off the land. Hearing of her aunt’s plight, her niece in England sent her a ticket. This story illustrates both the ruthless appetite for power unleashed by the colonial experience and the generosity of the great majority of Africans. The niece would look after her aunt uncomplainingly for the rest of her life, demanding nothing in return and regarding it as her plain duty to do so, also asking nothing from the British state.

My Zimbabwean experiences sensitized me to the chaos I later witnessed throughout Africa. The contrast between kindness on the one hand and rapacity on the other was everywhere evident, and I learned that there is no more heartless saying than that the people get the government they deserve. Who, *en masse*, could deserve an Idi Amin or a Julius Nyerere? Certainly not

would have avoided this particular criticism of the European mapmakers. On the other hand, pan-Africanism was not feasible, for the kind of integration that could not be achieved on a small national scale could hardly be achieved on a vastly bigger international one.

In fact, it was the imposition of the European model of the nation-state upon Africa, for which it was peculiarly unsuited, that caused so many disasters. With no loyalty to the nation but only to the tribe or family, those who control the state see it only as an instrument of exploitation. Gaining political power is the only way ambitious people see to achieve the standard of living that the colonialists dangled in front of their faces.

But it is important to understand why another explanation commonly touted for Africa’s postcolonial turmoil is mistaken: the view that the dearth of trained people in Africa at the time of independence is to blame. No history of the modern Congo catastrophe is complete without reference to the paucity of college graduates at the time of the Belgian withdrawal. And therefore the solution was obvious: train more people. Education in Africa became a secular shibboleth that it was impious to question.

The expansion of education in Tanzania, where I lived for three years, was indeed impressive. The literacy rate improved dramatically. School fees took precedence over every other expenditure. If anyone doubted the capacity of the poor to make investments in their own future, the conduct of the Tanzanians should have been sufficient to persuade him otherwise. (I used to lend money to villagers to pay the fees, and—poor as they were—they never failed to repay me.)

Unfortunately there was a harmful side to this effort. The aim of education was, in almost every case, that at least one family member should escape what

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nationalist guerrillas came to her village and commanded her parents to tell them where he was, that they might kill him as a traitor to the African cause. But not knowing his whereabouts, her parents could not answer and so, in front of her eyes, they tied her parents to trees and burned them to death. She was never able thereafter to lead a normal life. She did not marry, a social catastrophe for a woman in Zimbabwe. She was looked after by a cousin who worked for a white farmer, and she spent her life staring into space. Then the “war veterans” arrived, those who had allegedly fought for Zimbabwe’s freedom—in reality, groups of party thugs intent upon dispossessing white farmers of their land in fulfillment of Mugabe’s economically disastrous instructions. The white farmer and his black manager were killed, and all the workers were driven

the African peasants I encountered. The fact that such monsters could quite explicable emerge from the people by no means meant that the people deserved them.

It was often said that African states were artificial, created by a stroke of a European’s pen that took no notice of social realities. This notion overlooks two salient facts. The countries in Africa that do actually correspond to social, historical, and ethnic realities—Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia—have not fared better than those that do not. Moreover, in Africa, social realities are so complex that no system of boundaries could correspond. There are said to be up to 300 ethnic groups in Nigeria alone, often deeply intermixed geographically. Only extreme balkanization followed by profound ethnic cleansing could have resulted in the kind of boundaries that

Marx contemptuously called the idiocy of rural life and get into government service, from which he would be in a position to extort from the productive people in the country. The son in government service was social security, old-age pension, and secure income rolled into one. Farming, the country's indispensable economic base, was viewed as the occupation of failures, and so it was hardly surprising that the education of an ever larger number of government servants went hand in hand with an ever contracting economy. It also explains why there is no correlation between a country's number of college graduates at independence and its subsequent economic success.

The naïve supposition on which the argument for education rests is that training counteracts and overpowers a cultural worldview. A trained man is but a clone of his trainer, on this theory, sharing his every attitude and worldview. But in fact what results is a curious hybrid, whose fundamental beliefs may be impervious to the education he has received.

I had a striking example of this phenomenon recently, when I had a Congolese patient who had taken refuge in this country. He was an intelligent man and had that easy charm that I remember well. He had two degrees in agronomy and had trained in Toulouse in the interpretation of satellite pictures for agronomic purposes. He had worked for the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, and was used to dealing with Western aid donors and investors as well as academics. The examination over, we chatted about the Congo, and I asked him about Mobutu, whom he had known personally.

"He was very powerful," he said. "He collected the best witch doctors from every part of Zaire. Of course, he could make himself invisible; that was how he knew everything about us. And he could

turn himself into a leopard when he wanted."

This was said with perfect seriousness. For him, the magical powers of Mobutu were more impressive and important than the photographic power of satellites. Magic trumped science. My Congolese patient was perfectly relaxed, but usually Africans feel constrained to disguise from Europeans their most visceral beliefs, for which they know the Europeans usually feel contempt. And so, in dealing with outsiders, Africans feel obliged to play an elaborate charade, denying their deepest beliefs in an attempt to obtain the outsider's minimal respect. In keeping their inner selves hidden, they are equalizing the disparity of power. The weak are not powerless: they have the power to gull the outsider.

Perhaps the most baleful legacy of British and other colonials in Africa was the idea of the philosopher-king, to whose role colonial officials aspired, and which they often actually played, bequeathing it to their African successors. Many colonial officials made great sacrifices for the sake of their territories, to whose welfare they were devoted, and they attempted to govern them wisely. But they left for the nationalists the instruments needed to erect the tyrannies and kleptocracies that marked post-independence Africa. They bequeathed a legacy of treating ordinary uneducated Africans as children, incapable of making decisions for themselves.

Take one example: the marketing boards of West Africa. Throughout West Africa, millions of African peasants under British rule set up small plantations for crops such as palm oil and cocoa. Then the British colonial governments had the idea, benignly intended, of protecting the peasant growers from the fluctuations of the marketplace. They set up a stabilization fund, under the direction of a marketing board. In good years

the marketing board would withhold from the peasants some of the money their crops produced; in bad years it would use the money earned in the good years to increase their incomes.

Of course, for the system to work, the marketing boards would have to have monopoly purchasing powers. And it takes little imagination to see how such marketing boards would tempt an aspiring despot, such as Dr. Nkrumah, with grandiose ideas: he could use them in effect to tax Ghana's producers in order to fund his insane projects and to subsidize the urban population that was the source of his power, as well as to amass a personal fortune. A continent away, in Tanzania, Nyerere used precisely the same means to expropriate the peasant coffee growers, in the end causing them to pull up their coffee bushes and plant a little corn instead, which at least they could eat, to the great and further impoverishment of the country.

After several years in Africa, I concluded that the colonial enterprise had been fundamentally wrong and mistaken, even when, as was often the case in its final stages, it was benevolently intended. The good it did was ephemeral; the harm, lasting. The powerful can change the powerless, it is true; but not in any way they choose. The unpredictability of humans is the revenge of the powerless. What emerges politically from the colonial enterprise is often something worse, or at least more vicious because better equipped, than what existed before. Good intentions are certainly no guarantee of good results. ■

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*Theodore Dalrymple is a British doctor and writer who has worked on four continents and has most recently practiced in a British inner-city hospital and prison. This article is taken from Our Culture, What's Left of It, copyright © 2005 by Theodore Dalrymple, by permission of Ivan R. Dee, Publisher.*

# Impolite Society

How ideological zeal and social distance silenced a disputatious capital

By Georgie Anne Geyer

THE FALL OF 2002 was one of the strangest eras that I have seen in Washington in my 30 years here. The certainty of a war that only a tiny inner circle could understand hung over the beautiful and usually loquacious white city on the Potomac like a drear cloak. Everyone knew it was only a matter of time before the United States was irrevocably at war with a faraway country it little knew, but only an illuminated handful could answer why.

Strangest of all was that in place of the deep discussions over America's pressing issues that such a time always demanded, there was only silence. The American people seemed mute, apparently preferring not to challenge a war that they were being told was linked to the humiliations of 9/11. While the think tanks, which have in recent years taken up the foreign-policy discussions formerly left to the universities, were scheduled up to their ears in conferences on Iraq, virtually all of the discussions were on the pro-war side. Even when the war's proponents made the most naïve or downright false observations and predictions, they were greeted by a silence that I have never seen in this disputatious capital, where intelligent discussion, it was always historically believed in America, would ultimately lead to truth.

Things were no better in the Congress, where there seemed to be no discussion at all except for the spry and pugnacious old Sen. Robert Byrd, who, even while he was taking a highly intelligent position on the coming war, seemed

in that strange echoless chamber to be a ranting figure, a partly mad Capitol Hill Hamlet tearing his hair as he stalked the empty ramparts.

I made it my duty to attend session after session that fall to try to sense what was happening in Washington—and to the United States.

The end of September at the Heritage Foundation, I listened to the neoconservative writer Robert Kagan speak volubly about the "large middle class in Iraq" and how Iraq could "become a protectorate like Bosnia and Kosovo." Those of us who had bothered to go to Iraq over the years knew that most of the middle class had left two decades ago and that the cruel realities of Iraq made the Balkans look like Switzerland.

At the beginning of October at the American Enterprise Institute, the Iraqi writer Kanan Makiya, who like most of the exiles had not been home for decades, described the coming war as "an opportunity as large as the fall of the Ottoman empire in 1917" and said the new Iraqi state would be composed not of ethnic minorities but of citizens and insisted that it would be "demilitarized and renounce the use of force." At the same meeting, asked why he thought Iraq could be democratized, Princeton Islamic scholar Bernard Lewis repeated what he said at each of these meetings: "I had four graduate students from Iraq and they were very impressive."

When you think about it, of course, the fall of the Ottoman empire let loose chaos across the Middle East from Iraq to the Balkans, abolishing the Caliphate,

which until then controlled all of Islam, and thus, in the absence of authority in Islam, led to the schisms—the fundamentalists of al-Qaeda against the traditionalists of Cairo's Al Azhar, for instance—which we are still dealing with today. The idea of the consummately violent Iraq "renouncing force" was bizarre: Iraq is a country that keeps reinventing new methods of force. But then, of course, those four intelligent graduate students would take care of that.

The most stunning example in these days and days of meetings, however—I attended seven, that I can count—came another day at Heritage, where Reuel Marc Gerecht, a hard-line neocon and former CIA man, was talking about how it would be up to American troops to divide the good local elites from the bad old Ba'athists. Dan Serwer, a well-informed former State Department man by then with the U.S. Institute of Peace, asked, his voice full of irony, "And how is the second lieutenant from Iowa going to decide who the local elites are and who are the Ba'athists?" Gerecht was unbowed. "It's not hard," he responded blithely, of arguably the most secretive and conspiratorial country on earth. "In Iraq, it's real easy. It's all out in the open. They'll know."

Outside of a few "misfits" like Serwer, who knew the world and were willing to speak out, virtually no one in the audience said anything. In every session that I attended, there was a simple acceptance of the most bizarre rewritings of history and the most incredible misunderstandings of human nature that I



have ever seen. I had been writing against the war since July 2002 because I knew what a quicksand Iraq could be for even the most avid occupier, and soon I was also wondering, "Where are the American people?"

In the next four years there would be less serious discussion of the profound issues facing America, the Iraq War being only one, than I have seen here before. "During the Father Bush period, there was a presumption of civility," Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute told me. "We lost it under Clinton, then the present President Bush deliberately chose a strategy of being a divider, rather than a uniter."

Since the country had so broken down into the self-righteous, politically correct drawing-room Left of the Clinton administration and the radical, militarized, self-righteous Right of the Bush administration, hostesses suddenly were not inviting people who wouldn't agree with one another. Congress barely debated the war. It was in part a silent patriotism bred of 9/11, but it was also a

identify the president of the greatest power on earth as a "senior administration official." It was a uniquely bizarre act in journalistic practice, as if they were even trying to hide the president himself.

In fact, there were coming to light a series of disconnects in American society that had not been obvious before the war. If it were only a Right-Left division, as bad as that can be, it would be easy. But it was beginning to be clear to many of us that the country was not working anymore, that there was no cultural oneness and no longer any set of principles, like those that had inspired the Eastern Protestant establishment, that Americans more or less agreed were the principles of the state. (Could it be that President Bush, father, with his innate courtesy and his nuanced and "prudent" knowledge of the world, could indeed be the last of that purely American political center?)

To give just one example, in the 1960s, I had been a board member of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, and many of the other board members

people and their volunteer army. While the war is unpopular, you rarely hear a single complaint about the soldiers, even with all the allegations of torture and mistreatment. I do not believe that this is because of unthinking patriotism, I think it's because Americans see their professional paid warriors doing the job, and if they complain, they're afraid that somebody will tell them to send their own children to the remains of Mesopotamia, Ur, and Kandahar.

Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David M. Kennedy, professor at Stanford, addressed this syndrome last summer in the *New York Times* under the headline, "The Best Army We Can Buy," saying, "The fact remains that the United States today has a military force that is extraordinarily lean and lethal, even while it is increasingly separated from the civil society on whose behalf it fights. ... Some will find it offensive to call today's armed forces a 'mercenary army,' but our troops are emphatically not the kind of citizen-soldiers that we fielded two generations ago..."

On top of that, you have the now infamous private contractors in Iraq, who seem to be under no one's supervision and thus further confuse the question of who is loyal to what. Not incidentally, most contractors in Iraq charge \$200 an hour per person and are therefore encouraged to keep the interrogations—and, too often, the torture—going. Four hours and it's up to \$800—for only one man. It adds up.

Then there are the other disconnects. Former ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War and superior thinker Chas W. Freeman Jr. notes, "It is not realistic to expect the administration to do anything other than more of the same unless there is a real debate. We went through a second election—and there was not a word, only stifling conformity. There are multiple factors for the silence. A lot of it has to do with

SINCE THE **COUNTRY HAD SO BROKEN DOWN** INTO THE **POLITICALLY CORRECT DRAWING-ROOM LEFT** AND THE **RADICAL, MILITARIZED RIGHT**, HOSTESSES SUDDENLY WERE **NOT INVITING PEOPLE** WHO WOULDN'T AGREE WITH ONE ANOTHER.

kind of new, free-floating fear, perhaps of a perceived Leviathan state where power would flow toward an increasingly powerful executive.

And the White House did not make it easy to disagree. The mood there was of such secrecy, buoyed by the president's lack of curiosity, that, the day before the State of the Union address in 2004, neo-conservative journalists—and only neo-conservative journalists—were called to the White House and briefed in an almost surreptitious manner by the president. They were told that they were to

were the heads of the biggest and most powerful corporations. These men and women took a very active role in influencing Washington on foreign policy and they were deeply and actively concerned. Had they still been around that summer of 2002, they would have been haunting the Oval Office. But there is nothing like that today, as corporation presidents are kept busy answering indictments and dwelling on themselves.

Another disconnect, perhaps the most profound one, is the division that few dare speak of: between the American

9/11 and the natural tendency to trust our leaders to do the best for the country. All of us rallied behind him—and he let us down terribly.

“But a second problem is the dysfunctionality of the Democratic Party. It doesn’t fulfill the objective of an opposition party, which is to raise issues and object—because members don’t have the confidence of their convictions. Many of them also felt they had been wrong in voting against the first Gulf War. Then, on the Republican side, there is a long American tradition starting with isolationism. This is a morally superior stance. But it very easily turns into unilateralism and militarism. We’re better than they are—we’re morally superior—it is right to impose upon them—armed evangelism.”

He summed up with, “So our democracy is not functioning. It is more than a political crisis, it is a constitutional crisis. Our adversary system depends upon open debate, and we don’t have it.”

Herman Pirschner Jr., president of an innovative think tank close to the Republican Party, the American Foreign Policy Council, believes those divisions within Congress come out because representatives spend almost no time together—thus when they do come together, only on the floor of Congress, they are most often antagonists. “They go home most long weekends,” he mused with me. “To really discuss issues, they would have to have time to discuss and sit into the night. People used to live together in town, they socialized. Even during Watergate, President Nixon kept up his weekly poker game with Tip O’Neill. This administration needs relations with people who disagree with it and correct them when they’re wrong. Everybody needs an intellectual friend to keep him out of trouble when he’s wrong.”

In the winter of 2003, I was on a panel at a congressional retreat at the Greenbrier Hotel, the idea being that congress-

men knew one another so little these days that they were trying to bring their families together to introduce them. I wouldn’t say such an artificial occasion did much for congressional congeniality—they all left the same strangers they came—but it surely surprised me to learn that most congressmen went home Thursday and many didn’t return till Tuesday. Indeed, how could there be an effective Congress? How could there be the kind of debate that could enliven the country?

That same absence of contact can be seen in relations—or non-relations—between the press and politicians. Members of the press don’t know the politicians generally anymore, so they can far more easily fall into a “take no prisoners” stance because they never have to face the person in City Hall. As Jim Lehrer said at the Cosmos Club last fall, “We don’t have a civilized discourse right now because the people who are involved in this don’t want us to have it.” Or just don’t care enough to have it.

Indeed, the Left/Right breakdown in the media has both led to divisions in the country and solidified them. Even a fine newspaper like the *Los Angeles Times* for a period had its op-ed page marked “Left” and “Right,” as if there were nothing in between. Americans who watch PBS wouldn’t think of looking at Fox.

Ornstein is also disturbed by the lack of civilized discourse in Washington, and he says that the extremist positions mean that people don’t even listen anymore, they just look to ascertain that the messenger is politically correct. “We’ve gotten so caught up in the tribal wars we don’t even assume the same assumptions anymore,” he told me. “For instance, people make assumptions that, because I’m at AEI, they assume I’m one of the AEI neocons. So I can say things at conservative meetings that would be perfectly acceptable at Brookings, like criticizing giving medals to the people who got us into this mess—but no one says anything because they think

I’m one of them. It’s gone so far that, if you’re not one of us, you’re one of them. It’s gotten to a point where you don’t think through what the politics are or what they’re not. And it’s all exacerbated by the TV discussions...”

Many blame the bad blood today on those neocons who introduced the war to us three years ago with such meager opposition. “There is no doubt that the neocons with their Manichean black and white view of the world politely polarized society,” Zbigniew Brzezinski told me. “Everything is black and white now. It is a vicious fight, and no longer between alternative but reasoned positions.”

“America has lost its capacity for being indignant,” Cherif Bassiouni of Chicago’s DePaul University and one of the world’s great jurists commented. “Where has our capacity for indignation gone? The problem of a nation that loses its respect for its Constitution and treaties—what is next? Hasn’t every totalitarian or undemocratic regime started like that?”

But the prominent historian Arthur Herman perhaps came closest to the core of the problem. “What we’re talking about,” he told me, “is the absence of certain fundamental principles that Western society has always represented. What is driving the evangelical movement, for instance, is not a ‘revolt of the masses’ but the fact that they see the roots of the society being eaten away.”

Can we come back together again? Can we mix and meld again and become one people? Can we talk among ourselves as we used to, argue into the night and kiss in the morning while we consider one another’s positions? The answer is out; but if we don’t, if we can’t, if we won’t, we will never again be the country history fated us to be. ■

*Georgie Anne Geyer is a nationally syndicated columnist and the author of Guerrilla Prince: The Untold Story of Fidel Castro.*

# Open Door Policy

President Bush's approval rating could not have slipped into the 30s were his base not bleeding. The gloss is off democratic crusading, and happy talk about Iraqis

standing up is no substitute for an exit strategy. Social Security reform swirled down the drain months ago, leaving no domestic agenda save Katrina spending. Add Libby and Brownie, Miers and Murtha, and Bush probably spends many days missing Crawford.

He can't change policy—even if strategy so dictated, his temperament doesn't run in that gear—so he is left trying to change the subject. With few options, he landed on immigration reform. But could someone who stumped in Spanish and turned “jobs Americans won't do” into a national cliché convincingly sell himself to the Right as an immigration reformer?

Short answer: no—but it may not matter.

On Nov. 28, the president traveled to Tucson, Arizona to deliver a speech he hoped conservatives would only half hear. He wagered that they would be so taken with his beefed up border spending and promise to “enforce the laws of our country”—a safer applause line has never been written—that they wouldn't notice he's still serving warmed over amnesty.

Bush put together a decent consolation prize: aerial drones, ground sensors, infrared cameras; an end to the “catch and release” program; more Border Patrol agents; a nod to interior enforcement. But the sheriff hasn't given up on playing social worker. Read his lips: “People in this debate must recognize that we will not be able to effectively enforce our immigration laws until we create a temporary worker program.” Some debate.

When he signed the Homeland Security Appropriations Act back in October, President Bush said of illegal immigrants, “Family values do not stop at the Rio Grande River. People are coming to put food on the table.” He immediately segued into a pitch for his guest-worker scheme as a panacea for the illegal-immigration problem.

Now, odds are Bush hasn't undergone some epiphany in the last two months. Yet he can promise enhanced enforcement in good conscience because, on his theory, border control will become increasingly unnecessary. While the immigration-reform movement is busy congratulating itself on winning a 60 percent increase in border spending, he plans to make it irrelevant by inviting the former illegals inside.

“Bush decided to give these guys their rhetorical pound of flesh,” a Republican official close to the White House told *Time* magazine. “In return, he wants a comprehensive bill, which is what he has always wanted. He's just going to lead with a lot of noise about border security.”

Immigration reform isn't a risky bet anymore. Sept. 11 recast it in security terms, removing any nativist taint and bestowing the immunity that attaches to anything vital to the war on terror. But the politics still aren't tidy. Bush's own party divides between conservative House Republicans led by reform stalwart Tom Tancredo and moderate Republican senators like John McCain, who has partnered with Ted Kennedy on a guest-worker bill. More broadly, the corporate wing of the GOP clamors for

cheap labor, while the talk-radio crowd decries cultural disintegration. And party chieftains haven't given up on the grail of the Hispanic vote.

To navigate this strait—legalization being his lodestar—Bush can afford to give House Republicans their pound of flesh. The Senate will pass a guest-worker bill. To keep their enforcement provisions intact, House reformers will have to accede in conference, and Bush can chalk up a much-needed political win.

Conservatives who come up short—as they did the last time a Republican president sold them on legalization as a prerequisite for enforcement in 1986—will try to comfort themselves that this isn't an explicit amnesty. After all, Bush promised it wasn't, a mantra he repeats at every whistle stop as if the saying makes it so. “I oppose amnesty,” he vowed again in the Arizona speech—minutes before affirming that he plans to “bring workers from out of the shadows.” Why exactly were they hiding, Mr. President? And how might they be brought out except by some pardoning mechanism? Amnesty seems the logical synonym.

The Right has been asked to trust this president before—that Saddam had nuclear dreams, that his secretary had the legal chops to sit next to Scalia. They will be equally deluded if they take this on faith. Reform of the catch-and-release program that Bush unveiled in Tucson was required because 75 percent of those turned loose disappear. His “guests” will be no different. They will not want to return home any more than they will be forever content to do dirty jobs. But by the time that bill comes due, Bush will have left town. It will be another president's problem—or perhaps his opportunity to charm gullible conservatives with tough talk about resolving the immigration crisis. ■

# Arts & Letters

## FILM

[*Memoirs of a Geisha*]

### The Girl With the Gray Eyes

By Steve Sailer

AMERICAN COMMERCE couldn't function without the salesman personality: outgoing, brash, and self-assured. Yet Japanese corporate life carries on nicely despite a shortage of Donald Trumps.

The Japanese were among the first to develop enterprises far larger than the family firm. To induce the comfort level they needed to strike deals with people who weren't relatives, the relatively shy, sensitive, and easily shamed Japanese evolved an elaborate mode of business entertaining lubricated by food, sake, and expert hostesses. At banquets, geisha provided both classy entertainment in the traditional arts and light flirtation, making old moguls feel young and optimistic again.

Although only a rich man could afford a geisha as his mistress, in a society where marriages were mostly arranged and women with children devoted much more attention to their offspring than to their husbands, drinking with geisha offered salarymen a taste of what few wives or common prostitutes were trained to dispense: style, wit, and allure.

Now much reduced in numbers, the old "flower and willow world" of the geisha makes a fascinating but less than wholly appealing subject for American audiences in "Chicago" director Rob

Marshall's worthy and sumptuous if not always successful adaptation of American author Arthur Golden's admirable middlebrow bestseller *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Except for one dance scene that looks like a 1984 Siouxsie and the Banshees MTV video, Marshall lets viewers indulge in a Big Hollywood Movie version of classic Japanese aesthetics.

An impoverished little girl is sold into indentured servitude in the "floating world" of Kyoto's Gion nightlife district in the late 1920s. Born with virtually the only "translucent gray" eyes in Japan, the orphan begins to attract attention, both malignant and benevolent (but still creepy).

The great Gong Li ("Farewell, My Concubine") plays a beautiful and fierce aging geisha, a sort of Wicked Witch of the East, who sees our young heroine as a potential rival to destroy.

Our Cinderella is laboring as a servant when a prince of a fellow known as the Chairman tries to cheer the pretty child up by purchasing her the Japanese equivalent of a snow cone. The smitten youngster resolves to grow up to be a geisha and become the mistress of this middle-aged married man.

A kindly geisha played by the lovely Michelle Yeoh ("Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon") mentors her in decorum and music—years of training gets boiled down to the customary movie montage—then auctions off the 15-year-old's virginity for a record sum.

As the heroine, Zhang Ziyi is a bit of a disappointment, lacking the seductive sparkle in her eyes with which she dazzled as the taxi dancer in Wong Kar Wai's hypnotic "2046."

This Sony Pictures release employs Chinese actresses as the three Japanese geisha. The Chinese film industry, led by

directors such as Wong and Zhang Yimou ("Hero"), has entered a golden age of old-fashioned glamour, cultivating some of the most charismatic movie stars on earth. In contrast, much of Japan's creativity now flows into videogames for children and nerds.

A friend in Japan writes, "This main role was the chance of the century for a good Japanese actress to become world famous. But the Japanese aren't as aggressive as the Chinese and won't kill for a part." Indeed, on the world stage, the term "Japanese celebrity" is something of an oxymoron, due both to their diffidence and to their difficulty in learning English, the global alpha language. For instance, the handsome, likeable Japanese actor Ken Watanabe ("The Last Samurai") is almost unintelligible as the Chairman.

This is not to say the three Chinese stars are terribly comprehensible in English either. An on-set script doctor had to rewrite lines that the actors found unpronounceable. So the dialogue ended up less lyrical, and you'll still be straining to comprehend it.

There wasn't any ideal solution. Some critics are outraged that the filmmakers went for the "mall audience" by not shooting in Japanese, but the source novel is in English. Marshall might have cast English-speaking Asian-American actresses, but there aren't many well-known ones besides Lucy Liu, who could have played Gong's dragon princess role, although not as well.

If you wait for the DVD, you can watch "Memoirs" with the captions turned on, but then you would miss the opportunity to bask in the exceptional beauty of the sets and costumes as you watch it on a big theatre screen. ■

Rated PG-13 for mature subject matter and some sexual content.



## BOOKS

[*Imperial Grunts: The American Military on the Ground*, Robert Kaplan, Random House, 375 pages]

# Like Tourists With Guns

By Christopher Preble

In *Imperial Grunts*, Robert Kaplan returns to his roots as a travel writer. Now, though, the travelers and the guides are the officers and enlisted men who form the backbone of the American military. The longtime correspondent for *The Atlantic Monthly* is particularly interested in the young mid-level officers and senior noncoms who represent “the true agents of the imperium.” Judging from the stories compiled in this book, these men have only one overarching complaint: they don’t get to do their job nearly enough. “It’s a great life,” effuses a National Guardsman from Florida, “You get to see the places tourists never do. We’re like tourists with guns.”

Kaplan, who once served in the Israeli military, celebrates the heroism, selflessness, and ingenuity of America’s armed forces. What’s more, Kaplan’s adoration of these men is infectious: you come to like nearly every person profiled in this book. But while his writing is evocative and fresh, and while his respect and admiration for America’s fighting men is genuine, Kaplan’s approach to U.S. foreign policy is dangerously flawed.

His thesis is relatively straightforward: the United States is an empire, Americans should celebrate it as such, and the best way to appreciate American hegemony in all its glory is by following the men who are responsible for sustaining it—the troops, the grunts, men who “saw themselves as American nationalists, even if the role they performed was imperial.” In an age when some still consider it un-American to

liken the U.S. global military presence to empire, Kaplan presents it as a given. Empire is what we have. The civilian leadership has deemed it necessary, and they have left it to the Pentagon to work out the details.

It is time for Americans to become accustomed to this role, he argues, even if they continue to resist the moral and intellectual baggage associated with the term. Given that the threats are so numerous and so grave, and given that the proficiency gap between the U.S. military and that of every other country on the planet—but especially those studied in this book: Yemen, Colombia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Afghanistan, and Iraq—cannot possibly be surmounted, Americans had best become comfortable with the reality of American empire as quickly as possible.

In nearly every place that Kaplan visits, he finds evidence to support his claim:

- “Even as U.S. leaders denied that America had imperial intentions, Colombia ... illustrated the imperial reality of America’s global situation.”
- “The fact that America did, in fact, constitute a world empire was best demonstrated by distant Mongolia’s inclusion in it.”
- “Anyone who doubts that America is, or was, an imperial power should come to the Philippines.”
- “In Afghanistan the United States had found itself in a situation for which the only comparisons were with other empires of the past.”

For Kaplan, the entire globe equates to the American West in the 19th century. His travels take him into “Injun Country,” a land of potentially hostile peoples that must be guided, managed, or subdued by the long arm of the American military. The Pentagon set out to accomplish this daunting task by dividing the globe between five area commands. “This map bore uncanny resemblance to one drawn in 1931 for the German military,” Kaplan explains. “The United States, having vanquished Ger-

many’s budding world empire in World War II, now had operational requirements for maintaining its own.” For Kaplan, this map serves as the organizing vision for his entire book. “After I first saw the map in the Pentagon, I stared at it for days on and off, transfixed,” he writes, “How could the U.S. not constitute a global military empire?”

The American moment at the dawning of the 21st century, Kaplan explains, is just that, “a grand and fleeting moment, a moment that even if it lasted for several more decades would constitute but a flicker among the long march of hegemony that had calmed broad swaths of the globe.” But the American brand of imperialism might be “particularly short-lived.” “Because it was a fomentor of dynamic change,” Kaplan explains, “a liberal empire like the United States was likely to create the conditions for its own demise.”

And we should embrace this, a foreign policy that may spell our own demise? The mere suggestion seems preposterous, but it is based upon Kaplan’s unshakable belief that we have no choice but to fight disorder and lawlessness everywhere around the world.

This is not to say that all forms of imperialism are created equal. Kaplan takes great pains to differentiate the American empire from those of the Spaniards in the Philippines, the French in Djibouti, or the Soviets in Afghanistan. The key difference, however, may be one more of style than of substance. Cognizant of the general human tendency to resist foreign meddling, Kaplan would prefer that the United States perform its imperial role behind the fig leaf of indigenous forces. He explains, “Imperialism was less about conquest than about the training of local armies.”

But even Kaplan’s empire-in-disguise bumps up against a troublesome Catch-22: the would-be beneficiaries of our largesse will not tolerate an indefinite U.S. military presence in their countries, but the governments of these same nations are often equally reluctant to see the training mission ever end. As we are now learning in Iraq, training with the

expectation that security responsibilities will eventually be handed over to the locals is easier said than done, and the longer we stay, the harder it becomes to extricate ourselves.

This is hardly unique to Iraq, even if the level of violence there vastly exceeds anything confronting the American military elsewhere in the world. In *Imperial Grunts*, Kaplan documents the repeated frustrations of American military personnel attempting to assist fragile and/or incompetent governments. For example, when the Americans put forward a plan to attack and destroy a pocket of Abu Sayyaf terrorists operating on the tiny Philippine island of Jolo, a key Philippine general was nowhere to be found. "He was not interested in getting out of bed," an American officer told Kaplan. But why should Americans be more concerned about security in the Philippines than are the Filipinos? Why should American taxpayers bear the financial burdens, why should our soldiers risk their lives, when Filipino military leaders don't have the will even to get out of bed? Kaplan never answers these questions, but he implies that, given such fecklessness on the part of client states, Americans have no choice.

But what of the problem of dependency? Why should a foreign government go to the expense of maintaining a genuine army when it can count on Uncle Sam to do the work instead? When he discovers that Colombian soldiers were tipping off the narco-terrorists they were supposed to be fighting, an exasperated American explained, "we're not going to get anywhere in this war ... if they [the Colombian government] can't even confiscate cell phones from their privates." The government's refusal to implement so simple a policy suggests that the Colombians really don't want their problems to go away, particularly if this will also entail the departure of American troops.

Through these demonstrations of ineptitude, the governments being aided by the U.S. military often reveal one authentic proficiency: they are particularly adept at concocting plausible

arguments for why they are incapable of defending themselves. The only way to ensure that the indigenous forces being trained by American troops will eventually be capable of standing on their own will be to take off the training wheels. When that occurs, there will be some skinned knees, some bruised egos, but at least we won't be the only ones doing the pedaling.

Yet the training wheels almost never come off, and some reject the notion that they ever should. Kaplan quotes one American noncom who declared emphatically that there was "No freaking way we're depending on the Filipino military."

While no one should expect us Americans to stake our security on the good offices of others, why should we care more about other countries' security than their own leaders do? For Kaplan, the answer is obvious: there are no purely indigenous threats. Their security is synonymous with our own. Challenges to fragile governments anywhere in the world are, *ipso facto*, threats to the United States.

But insecurity anywhere does not pose a threat everywhere. Policymakers and military leaders must address the urgent before they tackle the important, much less the peripheral. They must differentiate between those threats that we must address and those that are best left to others. A sensible foreign policy is conducted according to a sense of priorities guided by certain criteria; Kaplan's global empire implies that there are no criteria.

Yet that is unsustainable. The American public has only a limited appetite for risky—not to mention unnecessary—military missions. At one point in the book, Kaplan dismisses such instincts as "semi-isolationist ignorance," when in fact they are eminently sensible. If Americans can be convinced that the costs of empire are modest, they are likely to go along for the ride, particularly if they sense that someone else, or someone else's son or daughter, will be the one drawing hostile fire. But when Americans are forced to confront the costs, and when they compare the costs

with the benefits, they can be expected to withdraw their support. That is what is now occurring with regard to the Iraq mission.

The American officers and noncoms—Kaplan's "imperial grunts"—are industrious, flexible, and completely dedicated to the mission. But they don't dictate the mission, the civilian leadership does. For too long, both major parties have pursued empire even as they avoided the term. Kaplan would have the politicians embrace it, but his imperial advocacy strikes a discordant note. American opinion is moving in a very different direction, and an astute politician would be wise to get ahead of this building wave. In coming years, we should expect that the public will demand a restrained and prudent foreign policy pledged to safeguarding and advancing American security.

The harm that has come to our nation through the reckless interventionism of the past 15 years cannot be quickly reversed, but the path to recovery must begin with an urgent commitment to stop the bleeding. Of the ten or so major military operations since the end of the Cold War, the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan stands alone as a legitimate and wise exercise of American military power. And yet, even here, Kaplan admits to the difficult challenges we face. "Everything was possible in Afghanistan—with years and patience," he explains. "The empires that had succeeded in bringing order and a better material life to their colonies had had both of these elements. But it was unclear if the Americans did."

It is not unclear any longer. Americans are fast losing patience with empire, even when it is romanticized and euphemized, because they accurately sense that the benefits do not outweigh the costs. Even as talented a raconteur as Robert Kaplan cannot reverse this trend, and for that we should be thankful. ■

*Christopher Preble is director of foreign-policy studies at the Cato Institute and a founding member of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy.*

[*Beethoven: The Universal Composer*, Edmund Morris, HarperCollins, 256 pages]

## The Shakespeare of Music

By R.J. Stove

ONE DAY, probably in Leipzig during the 1830s, Robert Schumann attended a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. At this performance, amid the lead-in to the finale—the passage where soft strings trace ghostly patterns against a drum tattoo still menacing after even the *n*th rendition—Schumann noticed that a small boy in the next seat “pressed closer and closer to me; when I asked him why he did so, he answered, ‘I am afraid.’” That small boy thus proved himself a first-rate Beethoven critic.

The fear that Beethoven inspired in him should also extend to those who would seek to capture Beethoven's spirit in a mere book, or, still more recklessly, in a mere article. Discussing Beethoven's supreme feats, we risk imitating the silly woman in Dorothy Parker's anecdote, who, upon her first glimpse of the Grand Canyon, blathered: “Well! It certainly *is* attractive.”

Not the smallest hint of that female's reductionist idiocy mars Edmund Morris's beguiling, gripping, and wonderfully written account. Morris displays organizational confidence that, by an insoluble paradox, can derive from humility alone. Lucky is the neophyte who acquires his first sustained introduction to Beethoven's life and times from this book. Perhaps luckier still is the expert, his palate jaded by overfamiliarity, whom Morris's enthusiasm will enable to fall in love with Beethoven's achievement all over again.

Morris shares something of Beethoven's sheer verbal bluntness: anyone who can, like Morris in his prologue, dismiss Mahler with the single superb epithet “masturbatory” possesses an obvious scorn for fads. There

is also in Morris something of Beethoven's astounding compressive gifts. In fewer than 250 widely-spaced pages of actual text, Morris conveys Beethoven's depth with a skill that eludes many a dissertation twice as long. Here is no mere sketch, no dumbed-down *Cliff's Notes*-style résumé for airheads. One finishes Morris's homage not only with the sorrow involved in farewelling a musical genius but with the sense of an epic journey now finished.

Of the Kenyan-born Morris, and probably of no previous Beethoven scholar, it can be said that Beethoven literally saved him from death. Once, in Nairobi, after Morris had sat in virtual darkness with his father while listening to a Beethoven LP, the question arose: “which of us was going to get up and turn the lamp back on? I was too poleaxed by the music to move, so Dad did. This was fortunate, because the light disclosed a six-foot cobra that had somehow snuck in and coiled up on the warm parquet in front of the fire. Had I been the one to go to the lamp, I would have stepped barefoot right onto the cobra, and it would definitely have made its displeasure known.”

In his first chapter Morris depicts Bonn unforgettably, holding the reader's attention at once: “The Bonn of his boyhood was a small, walled, black-and-white city. ... Its peculiar chiaroscuro came from black lava streets and almost universal lime wash. Even the immense electoral palace was white, dazzling in summer but frigid looking in winter.” Redressing the imbalance caused by those who concentrate solely on Beethoven's middle and final years, Morris delineates with obvious relish Beethoven the exuberant young pup, anticipating Nietzsche's dictum “That which does not kill me, makes me stronger.” Here is Beethoven's father Johann, a bullying drunk whose life's purpose seems to have lain in making Leopold Mozart resemble music's greatest humanitarian—when Johann died, Bonn's elector jeered, “The revenues of the liquor excise have

suffered a loss.” Here are details of Beethoven's apprenticeship under Haydn's tutelage, during which a guarded mutual courtesy failed to hide a seething mutual impatience. Here is Haydn in his pathetic old age, suffering “a kind of torture inflicted by the body on the brain. He complained that his head was full of music beyond anything he had composed before, but that he simply could not write it down ... he was good for little else but a daily session at his piano, playing that same anthem [“The Emperor's Hymn”] over and over.” Here is a long, elaborate description of Beethoven's first outright masterpiece, the “Funeral Cantata For Joseph II,” which could well have given Haydn some ideas for certain passages in the latter's oratorio “The Creation,” although Morris dismisses, with justice, the notion that Haydn consciously plagiarized from his pupil. Here—treated, with a born dramatist's art at the end of chapter two—are the first intimations that Beethoven, hitherto famed for his freakishly acute ear, might be going deaf:

Many decades later, Countess Therese Brunsvik recalled climbing those three flights of stairs ‘in the last year of the last century’ with her sister Josephine, a volume of music under her arm. Beethoven was ‘very friendly,’ and accompanied Therese as she sang for him. One thing struck her as odd. His piano was out of tune.

We still cannot be certain of what gradually, pitilessly, destroyed Beethoven's hearing. The latest research blames this disaster upon lupus or some other autoimmune condition. This at least marks an improvement on the 1960s biographical craze for assuming that any famous man with mysterious health problems must have been syphilitic. A surprising number of other mysteries remain about Beethoven's life, for all the billions of words it has elicited. No one has discovered the precise day, in 1770, of his birth; records indicate only that his baptism occurred

on Dec. 17, from which it has been assumed, rather than proven, that his birth was the day before. And while speculation as to the identity of Beethoven's "Immortal Beloved" has largely ceased—in 1972 she was convincingly identified as Antonie Brentano, dedicatee of his "Diabelli Variations"—the relationship's exact nature and extent continues to be guesswork. This has not prevented Hollywood from spewing forth the wildest conjectures about Beethoven's sex life, notably in "Immortal Beloved," a cinematic debauch beside which "Amadeus" looks like the epitome of tactful scholarship. It is "Immortal Beloved's" ludicrous premise that Karl van Beethoven was not the composer's nephew but his son. It could have been worse. Another baseless and yet more offensive theory describes Karl as being his uncle's catamite.

Throughout Beethoven's later life, many thought that his mental health had

indeed gone the way of his auditory nerves. Berlin musician Carl Friedrich Zelter, the teacher of Mendelssohn, flatly assured Goethe, "Some say he is a lunatic." By the time Beethoven reached his mid-40s, he could scarcely even hear others' screams, much less their efforts at ordinary speech with him. His demonic—and ultimately successful—warfare against his licentious sister-in-law Johanna van Beethoven for the guardianship of young Karl is well summed up by Morris: "a whirl of litigation, fantasy, intrigue, and hyperactivity that resulted in a double precipitate: pain for all the human beings involved, and music that was, almost beyond credence, pure and grave and grand." Eventually Karl took the royal road traveled by other misfits down the ages: he joined the army. Having done rather well in uniform—after life with Uncle Ludwig, any sergeant major, however insensate, must have seemed refreshing—he survived until 1858.

Even the best-known public triumph of Beethoven's last years, namely the Ninth Symphony's premiere in 1824, had the character of a bad dream. Either after the second movement or after the finale (sources differ), the audience clapped wildly, but Beethoven—lost, on the podium, in his reveries—continued conducting. "One of the soloists, the teenage soprano Caroline Unger, had to take him gently by the sleeve of his coat and turn him around so that he could see the tumult." Three years later he perished, just after, with sublime appropriateness, a ferocious thunderclap. One startled guest in Beethoven's sick room swore that at this thunderclap, "he saw Beethoven lift his right hand and clench it for several seconds, with staring eyes. Then the hand dropped."

Soon the hangers-on struck. Anton Schindler, the master's former secretary, stole Beethoveniana in huge quantities, including 138 of the conversation books through which Beethoven had striven to communicate with those around him. Schindler also poisoned the wells of Beethoven studies with such malign diligence that a hundred years elapsed

before musicologists realized his full propensity as forger. Today, Morris laments, Austria's and Germany's Beethoven sites "have a tired, touristy, stop-at-the-shop quality to them. Guides recite Schindler's fake anecdotes, and shrug when challenged." Nevertheless, even on the tourist trail Morris finds genuine pilgrims—as distinct from clueless rubbernecks—to admire: "Climb the mildewed stairway of the most obscure building he ever lived in, and you can be fairly sure of bumping into a Welsh choral society, or a party of reverent Japanese."

In Beethoven's house are many mansions. For some music-lovers, the "Missa Solemnis" represents the peak of Beethoven's output; for a much larger number of music-lovers, his last string quartets contain his quintessence. This reviewer, if his desert island allowed CDs of only one Beethoven genre, would choose the piano sonatas, preferably played by Claudio Arrau, with Artur Schnabel's ancient performances—the fast movements mostly magnificent ruins, the slow movements exceptionally profound—as a supplement. With the piano sonatas, Beethoven has "not youth nor age." There the shopworn tag about him being "the Shakespeare of music" is especially applicable because not only does no sonata resemble any other composer's—except in the most superficial respects—but no sonata fundamentally resembles any of its companions either. Some look simple enough on the printed page for any sophomore with vague keyboard instincts to strum through them passably. Others, such as the "Hammerklavier," are among the most forbidding obstacle courses—for performer and listener alike—that man's mind can devise. Long may they continue so. As the late British pianist-musicologist Denis Matthews observed in his splendid monograph on these works: "The triumph of Everest would be nothing if one arrived at the summit by helicopter." ■

*R.J. Stove lives in Melbourne, Australia.*

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[*Women's Lives, Men's Laws*, Catharine A. MacKinnon, Harvard University Press, 558 pages]

## MacKinnon's Textual Harrassment

By Ilana Mercer

THE BALEFUL INFLUENCE of feminist Catharine MacKinnon on American jurisprudence cannot be underestimated. With relatively few obstacles from the dreaded patriarchy, MacKinnon, professor of law at the University of Michigan, "teacher, writer, and activist," has been transforming jurisprudence since the 1980s. Her legal conquests, especially in developing sexual-harassment law, are the subject of this volume, which comprises speeches and screeds MacKinnon has disgorged over 25 years.

If "the pale, patriarchal, penis people" have not hindered MacKinnon's successes, neither has her cold, inflexible, and fundamentally unscholarly mind—the mind of a propagandist and a casuist, in Camille Paglia's estimation—or her inability to write. The blurbs bedecking *Women's Lives, Men's Laws* promise "the deepest and best feminist writing around," writing that is "fresh, concise and incisive." MacKinnon, however, is an obscurantist, tying the English language into such knots as "Who that needs this equality can get it?" and "The rules of everyday life, in this sense, are that law which is not one, the law for women where there is no law."

Plucked from a legal journal, chapter 12, "Reflections on Sex Equality Under Law," offers a relatively clear exposition of MacKinnon's position. First-wave feminists strove for equality under the law, demanding only that existing rights and protections be applied to women. Due to their "assimilationist" approach, MacKinnon dubs them "domesticated

feminists." Because "[n]o woman had a voice in the design of the legal institutions that rule the social order," MacKinnon, in opposition to these Aunt Toms, concludes that the law itself is invariably flawed. If to be a woman is to be part of a group that has been and still is institutionally abused, remedies must transform the law and not merely apply it equally.

Women MacKinnon views as a besieged class of helots, men as members of a ruling elite that refuses to let go of patriarchal privilege and power. The former must fight to unseat the latter. And fight MacKinnon does: she hasn't stopped fighting since her first major victory in 1986. Unfortunately, she fights just like a woman: underhandedly, her weapon of choice being the civil law with its lower burden of proof.

In the landmark *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* decision, the United States Supreme Court applied MacKinnon's theory of sexual harassment as sex discrimination. The plaintiff, Mechelle Vinson, alleged her supervisor at the bank, Sidney Taylor, sexually harassed her, thus violating Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits employment discrimination based on sex. To read MacKinnon's febrile descriptions, Taylor's "repeated rapes" consisted in standing over the plaintiff in the vault, waving his *membrum virile* at her and laughing. Court briefs aren't as comical: they acknowledge the he-said-she-said quality of the case and concede the parties presented conflicting testimony about the existence of a consensual sexual relationship. Still, the paradigm that prevailed—MacKinnon's—required that these incidents be treated not as if they were "outrages particular to an individual woman" but as outrages that were integral to "her social status as a woman worker." Thomas Nagel of the *Times Literary Supplement* explains this unintuitive approach: "These are not just injuries to an individual who happened to be a woman: she is subjected to them because she is a woman."

It was bad enough when under antidiscrimination law employers lost control over their businesses. Worse was in store: the "radical paradigm of sexual harassment as sex discrimination" allowed the prohibition of naturally licit, previously protected speech, based upon no more than a complainant's subjective feelings of unease. Sexual harassment had been redefined so that women could sue an employer for creating a "hostile work environment" rather than because they had been pressured for sexual favors or experienced physical aggression.

With this twist, the MacKinnonites sundered the already excessively broad tort standard that applied to an intentional infliction of emotional distress. The presumption of innocence and traditional defenses such as a lack of intent to harm, absence of harm, or even the presence of consent, were no longer impediments to initiating charges in civil suits—and increasingly in criminal cases. MacKinnon's victories thus spelt the defeat of "neutral principles of constitutional law." Sexual-harassment kangaroo courts are her unique contribution to obliterating the Rights of Englishmen in companies and across campuses. But then, in MacKinnon's world, now ours, accused men are symbols of a larger sickness for which they must pay by forfeiting their rights.

Indeed, individual liberties have no place in her polemic. To the illiberal MacKinnon, individual rights are but an excrescence of the patriarchy: witness how the First Amendment has been interpreted to allow men their pornography. Privacy is of the same provenance: it only cloaks misogynist machinations. Tellingly, MacKinnon defends abortion not on grounds of privacy or dominion over one's person but on the basis of inequality:

The effects of women's inequality in procreation can range from situations in which the woman is prevented from conceiving, chooses to conceive and deeply desires to deliver but the baby dies, or does

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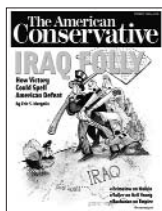
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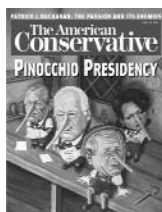


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not choose to conceive but is forced to deliver. ... However difficult an abortion decision may be for an individual woman, it provides a moment of power in a life otherwise led under unequal conditions that preclude choice in ways she cannot control.

To say the puritanical MacKinnon has sex on her mind is an understatement. When it comes to prostitution and pornography, she is a woman possessed, offering up as proof lengthy and lurid descriptions. Dare to suggest that the institution of private property allows men and women alike to determine their exposure to pornography, and you risk this schoolmarm's wrath. A classical liberal like Judge Richard Posner, whose monograph *Sex and Reason* MacKinnon critiques, might argue that third parties have no place in voluntary sexual transactions between consenting adults. But choice and agency are missing from MacKinnon's understanding of women. In effect, Mother MacKinnon is saying that women don't know their own minds. At her mercy, they would be infantilized, becoming wards of the state, incapable of rendering consent. The paternalism MacKinnon proposes is predicated on the sort of state intervention incommensurate with a free society—for which she is unapologetic.

If MacKinnon is not about a free society, neither is she about first principles. Consider her "legal realism." She believes "[l]egal theory should analyze the legal issues in terms of the real issues, and strive to move law so that the real issues *are* the legal issues." What might be viewed as a laudable quest for context proves problematic because MacKinnon's highly idiosyncratic version of reality is the only admissible context. It's her version or no version. While MacKinnon rightly disdains the postmodern take on truth, she also loathes "neutral principalism"—neutrality, objectivity, and equality before the law. Ultimately, MacKinnon's theory of justice is not metaphysical but mercenarily political.

It's also self-contradictory. Implied in her deployment of the law to transform women's daily lives is a belief in change. Yet she treats the patriarchy as though it were cast in concrete. How is it possible to change women's lives unilaterally without altering men's lives as well? I don't expect men's circumstances to move MacKinnon. But is there no significance to the fact that women continue to live longer than men, that many more men commit suicide, that men are more likely to be unemployed and less likely to get another job, and that they are more likely to suffer lethal industrial accidents? Is it of no importance that of the more than 2,100 soldiers who've died so far in Iraq and the more than 15,704 who've been wounded most were men? Not in MacKinnon's static and stony universe.

More pointedly, MacKinnon's theoretical castles-in-the-sky have mocked out of meaning genuine human suffering. As a one-time AIDS counselor in South Africa, this reviewer might be in a position to offer a measure of just what a mad hatter MacKinnon is. Does she know that in one of the more peaceful and prosperous places in Africa a woman—toddlers and babies included—is raped every few minutes? Such trammels of despair are rare in distaff America. Yet there is nothing in MacKinnon's disquisition to demonstrate even remotely she understands the difference between the liberated, sexually overbearing, self-adoring "Girls Gone Wild" of North America and the victims of, say, the sex-slave trade in Thailand, Mauritania, and India.

The strength of ideas rests on their relationship to reality. MacKinnon's unrealistic fulminations against a phantom patriarchy exist in the arid arena of pure thought. There are places where Catharine MacKinnon might pursue her métier more productively. Decamping to Darfur is one option—her work will have relevance there. ■

*Ilana Mercer is a columnist for WorldNetDaily.com and the Free-Market News Network.*

# Christmas Chronicling



This being the Christmas issue—yes, in this magazine we are permitted to use the “C” word—I will tell you about a very religious man, a chronicler of

change and decay, namely Thomas Fleming, editor of *Chronicles*, a monthly review of our culture, or lack thereof. Fleming recently spoke to Derek Turner, editor of *Right Now*, a conservative British publication. Tom is a former university teacher of classics who specialized in Greek tragedy and the technique of lyric poetry; he is also an Aristotelian by philosophy and a Southerner by conviction. In other words, a serious although very humorous man who thinks Paris is the French capital, rather than a talentless publicity-seeking Hollywood celebrity with an IQ lower than her age.

Fleming has often been told that his respectful views on Christianity, paganism, and Darwin are incompatible and that a good Catholic must detest ancient pagans and reject all that science teaches, and to that he answers with two words: “Prove it.” He dislikes fanaticism and ideology. It is the one quality he has taken from the Anglo-American tradition, that of tolerance for other creeds, a very Christian thing in my opinion. “I quite understand why serious ancient pagans were reluctant to give up a tradition that included a richness of ritual and a high intellectual theology.” He thinks Christianity took a wrong turn in the 18th century, when it attempted to reinvent the Church as a universal ideology. He calls Samuel Johnson the greatest conservative writer because “He was painfully aware of human suffering and inhumanity but firmly committed to social order which, however imperfect, improves the possibility of leading a good life.”

He also points out the contradictions of our culture—for example, the Constitution of the United States, which so

many Americans believe to be the answer to every problem in the world, including a place called Iraq. “When they founded Liberia with former American slaves they adopted the US constitution, but I have to say that the history of Liberia has been rather different from that of the United States.” Social, moral, and cultural questions take precedence over political questions, according to Fleming. He no longer believes in political parties or movements in the United States because they are unreliable, and their leaders will say and do anything in order to be elected. “I make friends with individuals rather than groups.”

HE REGARDS **NEOCONSERVATIVES** AS “**CHARLATANS AND LIARS**” AND DOES NOT BELIEVE THERE IS A SINGLE **NEOCON THINKER** WHO CAN BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY.

Conservatism, according to him, used to have an emphasis on tradition, the nation, our common history, small government, free enterprise, and so on. Needless to say, he regards neoconservatives as “charlatans and liars” and does not believe there is a single neocon thinker who can be taken seriously. “They are nothing but warmed-over socialists, leftists really. The elemental Leftist tendency has always been to oppose the civilized order, just as it opposed Christianity in the 15th century, the aristocracy in the 18th and 19th, and the monarchy. Then it was the free market which had to be eliminated. Today, social Leftism wants to eliminate the family and every semblance of sexual normality. In every generation, the target changes but the revolution rolls on, destroying everything that makes us sane and normal and healthy.”

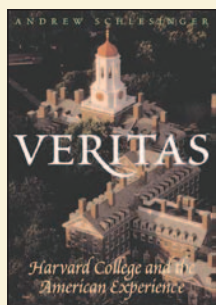
Amen! Just as Fleming was making his pronouncement about normality and health, the *New York Times* led off its wedding section with a full-page picture and text of two men getting married, normal couples taking a back seat in the following pages.

He is also very sound on Iraq. He points out that the truth is that the U.S. has porous northern and southern borders, and terrorist agents can come across at will. Yet we refuse to do anything about them. Instead, we are fighting a war we can never win and are stirring up terrorism against us. When asked about his policy program in relation to Islam, Fleming concluded that we should disestablish the Islamic governments the Clinton administration imposed in the Balkans and restore Christian areas to Christian control

while compelling the Albanian drug cartels in Kosovo to rebuild the hundreds of churches they have destroyed. Again, like a modern Delphic oracle, but more precise, no sooner had Fleming said that than the *New York Times* revealed that Bosnia is becoming a haven for Islamic militants. Leave it to the *Times* to discover something that even little old me knew was going to happen the moment we started bombing the hell out of the Christian enclaves back in 1998.

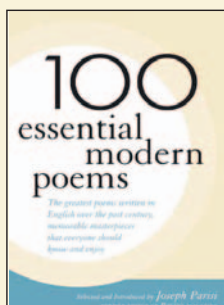
Finally, he believes we should allow no more Muslims into the United States and encourage our European allies to begin a humane process of repatriation. Last but not least, we need a fair settlement for the Israelis and Palestinians and to “provide the muscle to enforce it.” It is a fantasy program all right, but once again I can only say, “Amen!” And a very happy Christmas to all of you. ■

# Gifts of gab.



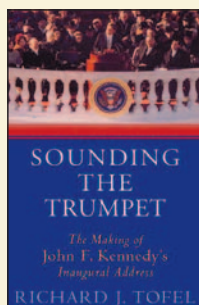
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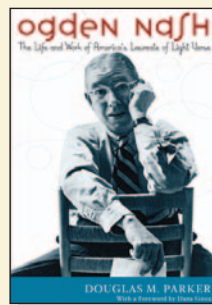
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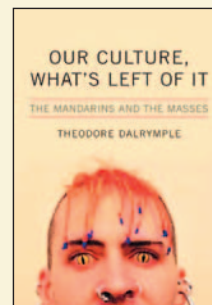
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